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SELF-REALIZATION [BRAHMAANUBHAVA]: THE ADVAITIC PERSPECTIVE OF SHANKARA

by

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PREFACE

Shankara, without any doubt, is one of the greatest minds India has ever produced: a seminal and creative thinker with a sharp intellect and keen mind. Besides, he is a dynamic person: with the power of his spirit coupled with his missionary zeal he awakened and renewed Hinduism from its spiritual slumber. Shankara was unhappy about the deplorable condition to which Hindu society had sink. At his time, the practice of Hinduism was reduced to mere ritualism and the caste system dominated every aspect of the Hindu society. Shankara saw the need to transform Hinduism, both in its philosophy and practice. By proposing the Advaita Vedaanta, he attempted to make Hinduism a true path to the experience of the Divine. Shankara's effort to do this forms the theme of this work, entitled *Self-Realization: The Advaitic Perspective of Shankara*.

Having come to the end of this project, I gratefully acknowledge persons and institutions who have stood by me in accomplishing this task. In a special way I acknowledge the support and encouragement I received in conceiving and accomplishing this work from Dr. George F. McLean, Ph.D., once a student of T.M.P. Mahadevan and R. Balasubramaniam at Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, the University of Madras, and now Professor Emeritus of Philosophy. At the Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., he directed my first explorations of the metaphysics of Shankara and due to his constant support I have been able to complete this work. I am grateful to the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, for publishing my earlier works (*The Authentic Human Destiny: The Paths of Shankara and Heidegger* and *The Experience of Being: The Heideggerian Perspective*) and consenting to publish the present work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB Aatmabhooda

AI Aparokshaanubhuuti

ASG Agamasaastra of Gaudapaada

AU Aiteriya Upanishad

AV Aatmajnaanoopedesha Vidhi

BG Bagavat Giita

BGB Bagavat Giita Bhaashya

BSB Brahma-Suutra Bhaashya

BU Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad

BUB Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad Bhaashya

Ch.U. Chanduukhya Upansihad

CU Chaandoogya Upanishad

GKV Gaudpaadakaarika Bhaashya and Maandukhya Upanishad Bhaashya

IU Isha UpanishadKe.

U Keena UpanishadKe.

U.B Keena Upanishad Bhaashya

KU Kaatha Upanishad

KUB Kaatha Upanishad Bhaashya

Ma.U Maanduukhya Upanishad

MU Mundaka Upanishad

MUB Mundaka Upanishad Bhaashya

PI Panchadassi

PM Panchiikaranam

PU Prasanna Upanishad

PV Panchiikarana-Vaarttikam

RV Rig Veda

SDV Shankara- Dig-Vijaya

SM Shankara, the Missionary

SU Svetaashvatra Upanishad

TU Taittiiriya Upanishad

TUB Taittiiriya Upanishad Bhaashya

UI Upadeshasaahasrii

VC Viveekachudaamani

VSS Vedaantasaara of Sadaananta Yogindra

VV Vaakyavritti of Shankaraachaariya

INTRODUCTION

Every human person is a seeker of that which makes him happy and accomplishes in him a sense of fulfillment. But he could make an error in recognizing what makes him happy and the means of attaining it. That is the reason we find different people go after different things, thinking that they would find fulfillment in them. Some seek money; others fame and power; yet others find joy in going into the forest leaving all worldly pleasures to find meaning in life. Often people walk through their life like blind men trying to find their way. So there is need for true teachers, who not only would point out the goal of life, but also provide the means of attaining it. Of the many teachers India has produced, the most significant *Guru* is Shankaraachaariya. He taught people that the goal of human existence is self-realization, which is the same as *Brahman*-realization, and the means of reaching this goal. In the first section of the introduction we attempt to look into Shankara's background and life, while the second section of the introduction lays out the plan by which we would unfold Shankara's ideal of self-realization.

1. SHANKARA'S BACKGROUND AND LIFE

In this section, we will outline the spiritual, intellectual and social situation before and during Shankara's time. We will look also into Shankara as an ascetic, a missionary and an interpreter of the Hindu scriptures. This section will also highlight the many-sided personality of Shankara and the importance of his Advaitic school of thought.

1.1. The Age of Shankara

Shankara lived at a time when society faced serious spiritual emptiness, intellectual crisis and social decadence. Historically it was more than ten centuries after the emergence of Buddhism. The spiritual situation was deplorable. Both Jainism and Buddhism had lost their original glory. The message of *ahimsa* and compassion preached by the Lord Buddha had fallen onto deaf ears. The original teaching of Buddha stressed the importance of moral life, in the process sidelining theistic worship. Over the centuries that followed, there emerged a number of Buddhist schools, the adherents of which used strict logic and reason to defend the rationalism and atheism inherent in Buddha's teachings, while totally forgetting the importance he gave to the supremacy of an ethical life of love and compassion. Thus, the common people were left neither with an ethical way of life nor with a religion to practice, as they could not come to terms with the rationalism and atheism propagated by the Buddhist schools. This, in turn, led to the worship of Buddha as God, the emergence of elaborate rituals of worship, and the Buddhist monks transforming themselves into priests of these new ceremonies and exponents of popular stories about Buddha. The spiritual life, therefore, among the Buddhists was at a low point, as what were left of Buddhism were mere logical schools and corrupt ritual practices. Thus, Buddhism had completed a full circle, in that the very ritualism which Buddha combatted in founding Buddhism had infected it; in the process, the vitality and purity of Buddhism taught by Lord

Buddha had ceased to exist.[1] Madhava-Vidhyaranya in his *Shankara-Dig-Vijaya* portrays the spiritual degeneration of Buddhism as follows:

> In days of yore, . . . Lord Vishnu incarnated Himself as the Buddha and diverted unrighteous men from contaminating the Vedic Path by preaching a new religion for them. But today, the country is filled with the heterodox followers of that religion [Buddhism], as night is by darkness. They are indulging in carping criticism of the Veda, declaring it to be just a fraudulent means of livelihood for a few, and condemning its teachings of duties of *varnas* and *ashramaas* as mere superstitions. As people have given up the orthodox Vedic path and become heretics, there is none to do the daily devotional acts like *sandhya* or to take the life of renunciation.[2]

Thus, Buddhism had, by then, degenerated and deteriorated into innumerable philosophical schools that propagated atheism and rationalism, while popular Buddhism consisted of many corrupt religious and ritual practices. Religious practice, therefore, was left without any spiritual content.

Nor was the spiritual situation of Hinduism acceptable either. The decline of Buddhism provided an opportunity for the revival of Hinduism, but the aim of Hindu scholars at this time was not to bring genuine reform in Hinduism, but to attack and defile Buddhism. Elaborate attempts were made by Jaimini and Kumarila Bhatta to defend the teaching of Puurva Miimamsa, which contained details about Vedic rituals and sacrifices by way of logic and dialectics. The ordinary masses, who did not understand logic and rational approach, were prescribed rituals and sacrifices, often exaggerating their importance and the manner of their performance.[3] Thus, the whole practice of rituals and performances of sacrifices in the Hinduism of the time were bereft of genuine spiritual fervor and the deep inner experience of the Divine. The lack of inner spirit in the practice of Hindu religion did, in no way, provide any positive guidance to the people, as these elaborate rituals were without any purposive direction. Without any inner spirit and genuine purpose, the practice of Hinduism gave way to various sects, which attempted to expound their own beliefs rather than the truth contained in the Vedas.[4] Such sectarianism and varied interests of different sects turned the "benign gods and goddesses . . . into blood-thirsty ones, groveling in the mire of sensuality and lust, and demanding awesome, cruel and barbaric homage from their misguided devotees."[5]

Thus, both Buddhism and Hinduism, prior to and during Shankara's age were without any spiritual content and dynamism. Swami Atmananda summarizes the spiritual state of both the religions as follows: The people able to think were caught between Buddhist logic and atheism on the one hand and the subtle interpretation of Miimamsa on the other; the masses were caught between the Hindu Puraanas and Buddhist Jataka stories, or gorgeous ceremonies before the image of Buddha or the elaboration of the Vedic sacrifice. Spiritual insight was conspicuous by its absence. Such was the atmosphere in India that called forth a Shankara.[6]

At the intellectual level there was a serious crisis. Genuine interest for true knowledge was lacking. Since this period was given to religious sectarianism, each school of thought was only concerned about proving what it considered as true, rather than looking for true and objective knowledge about reality. As a result, on the one hand there were literalists and ritualists, who attempted to be faithful to the letter of the scriptures, in the process totally oblivious to the spiritual message contained in them; on the other hand there were nihilists, rationalists and atheists, who were totally opposed to the sacred teachings of the Vedas. There was a fanaticism that swayed the minds of most scholars, which led to attacks and belittlement other schools of thought, rather than really seeking the truth with an open mind. Swami Chinmayananda depicts the intellectual situation of the age of Shankara as follows: Hinduism had been almost smothered within the enticing entanglements of the Buddhist philosophy, and consequently the decadent Hindu society came to be disunited and broken up into numberless sects and denominations, each championing a different viewpoint and engaged in mutual quarrels and endless argumentations. Each pundit, as it were, had his own followers, his own philosophy, his own interpretation; each one was a vehement and powerful opponent of all other views. This intellectual disintegration, especially in the scriptural field, was never before so serious and so dangerously calamitous as in the time of Shankara.[7]

The spiritual and intellectual degeneration had its effects in the social life of the times. The divisive mentality that marked the intellectual and spiritual spheres also was carried over to the social life. Hindu society was weighed down by the yoke of caste system.[8] The lower castes were treated with contempt by the higher classes, especially by the priestly class. The *suudras* were often considered untouchables. They could never have a life on par with the other classes, in any sphere of social life. This led to the exploitation of the members of the lowest caste, who were ignorant and without any education. Priests used religion and rituals as a means of aggression, subordination and control over the lower castes, as it was more a means of intimidation rather than a means of solace for the people. Such religious practices led to social corruption and exploitation of the lower castes by the higher castes. Thus, the social life was not impacted by moral values. A utilitarian attitude dominated and controlled social relationships. Society was moving without any sense of direction and orientation.

Thus, the Indian heritage Shankara received to transform was like a ship without the navigator. There was an all-round degeneration. Every sphere of existence revolved around the superficial and the external, lacking true inner spirit. The following quotation truly depicts the state of India before Shankara was born.

> India was going through great intellectual, spiritual and social turmoil. Vedic religion had become a mere performance of elaborate rituals as advocated by Puurva Miimamsa, which took into consideration only the Brahmana portion of the Vedic lore. Buddhism was past its heyday of freshness and purity and had degenerated into innumerable philosophical schools and as many corrupt religious practices. . . .Hinduism had developed into a number of intolerant sects. Squabbles, dissensions and corruption prevailed in the name of religion. It was into such an age of fuming confusion, chaotic intellectual

> anarchy and social decadence that . . . Shankara was born to destroy the wicked and crooked ways of thinking, establish *Sanaatana Dharma*, and to impart to it the life-giving philosophy of non-dual *Brahman*.[9]

1.2. Shankara's Birth and Early Life

There is a legend that speaks of the circumstances that led to the birth of Shankara. According to it a devout couple of the Nambhudhiri family,[10] belonging to Kaaladi, a small village in the west coast of south India, did severe penance before the Swambhu Linga in Vadakkunnatha temple at Trichur, asking the Lord Shiva to bless them with a male child, as they were without children for a long time. Their prayer pleased the Lord and He appeared in a dream and placed before them the choice of a long-lived son of average intellect or a brilliant and virtuous son who would have a short life span. After much thought and prayer, they seem to have chosen the latter option.[11] Thus, the baby was born by an intervention of the grace of the Lord Siva. The child was named Shankara, possibly for two reasons. Firstly, he was born because of the grace of Siva, who is also known as Shankara. Secondly, by his vocation the child is called to be the bestower (*kara*) of happiness (*sam*) to all those who come to him.[12]

There is no consensus among the historians of Indian thought about the exact dates of his birth and death. According to Telang, Shankara belonged to the middle or the end of the sixth century A.D. Sir R.C. Bhaandaarkar suggests 680 A.D. as the year of Shankara's birth. Anantaanandagiri, in his biography of Shankara, *Samkaravijaya*, proposes that he was born in 44 B.C. and died in 12 B.C.[13] None of these is based on sound evidence, but are only possible dates. Today the generally accepted dates of Shankara's birth and death are 788 A.D. and 820 A.D. respectively.[14]

Though it is difficult to determine the exact dates of Shankara's life, the fact that he is an historical figure and a thinker of extraordinary merit is beyond any doubt. He was an academic prodigy, and even as a child he manifested extraordinary intelligence, capacity for memorizing and ability to communicate what he had grasped. By the age of three Shankara had not only learned the alphabet, but also was able to read, memorize and understand a whole book. Though his father, Sivaguru, wished to send Shankara to a *gurugula* school after *upanayanam*,[15] he died when Shankara was three years old. His wife Aryamba carried out Sivaguru's wish for their son, when Shankara was five years old.[16] Shankara rapidly learned the basics taught at the *gurugula* school and immersed himself in the study of the various disciplines. Madhava states Shankara's progress in learning as follows:

> Very quickly he [Shankara] learnt the four Vedas and the six Sastraas from the *Guru* who was astonished by the prodigious intelligence and capacity of the small boy. His fellow students could not keep pace with him and the *Guru* himself felt embarrassed by the demands on his limited capacity to teach. His progress in study was so rapid that within two or three months he equaled the *Guru* himself in knowledge. . . . [Besides], assiduously he learnt Logic, Yoga Philosophy, Samkhya of Kapila, and Miimamsa doctrines as expounded

> by Bhatta; but his interest and joy in these subjects got completely submerged in his tremendous enthusiasm of the non-dualistic doctrine of the Upanishads, like a well in the water of flood.[17]

Shankara was, thus, an extremely gifted boy. At an age, when most children learn reading and writing, Shankara began to compose books and write verses. It is said that at the age of six he wrote a book entitled *Balabodha-Samgraha*.[18] Besides, he was totally dissatisfied with the emptiness of formal learning. The teachers of his time did not practice the lofty truths they taught. He also recognized the intellectual, social and spiritual emptiness of the society in which he lived. Shankara, though a boy, realized the need for change and transformation in Hinduism, both in its philosophy and in its practice. He saw the need to understand the lofty truths of Hinduism in a new light and wanted his people to live by this new understanding of the scriptures.

Realization of the emptiness of the world and reflection on the death of his father, Sivaguru, made Shankara pensive. He was puzzled at the phenomena of life and death and wanted to find a solution to these mysteries of life. He saw the passing nature of this world and this life. *Mohamudgaram: The Shattering of Illusion*, which is believed to have been written by him at this period, reveals clearly the state of his mind, and his insight into life at this early age. In this work Shankara writes:

Who is they wife? Who is thy son?

These ways of this world are strange indeed.

Whose art thou? Whence art thou come?

Vast is thy ignorance, my beloved.

Therefore ponder these things and worship the Lord.

Behold the folly of Man:

In childhood busy with his toys,

In youth bewitched by love,

In age bowed down with cares B

And always unmindful of the Lord!

The Hours fly, the seasons roll, life ebbs,

But the breeze of hope blows continually in his heart.

Birth brings death, death brings rebirth:

This evil needs no proof.

Where then, O Man, is the happiness?

This life trembles in the balance

Like water on a lotus leaf B

And yet the sage can show us, in an instant,

How to bridge this sea of change.

When the body is wrinkled, when the hair turns gray,

When the gums are toothless, and the old man's staff shakes like a reed beneath his weight,

The cup of his desire is still full.

Thy son may bring thee suffering,

Thy wealth is no assurance of heaven;

Therefore be not vain of thy wealth,

Or of thy family, or of thy youth B

All are fleeting, all must change.

Know this and be free.

Enter the joy of the Lord.

Seek neither peace nor strife

With kith or kin, with friend or foe.

O beloved, if thou wouldst attain freedom,

Be equal unto all.[19]

This writing of Shankara clearly indicates his inner maturity, total detachment, perception of life and the world, rare virtues, great intelligence, and power of expression, about the time he completed the *gurugula* studies at the age of seven. Having completed his studies Shankara returned home to serve his mother. He also continued his study of the Vedas, offered oblations in the sacred fire twice a day and performed all the allied rituals faithfully. His fame spread so far and wide that even the king came to receive his blessings.[20]

1.3. Shankara

The Ascetic and the Missionary:

Shankara's inner experience of the Divine and his perception of the world as a passing reality instilled in him a desire to transform the people, the society and the religious practices of his time. Impelled by this desire to turn society into the way of truth, he wanted to embrace the monastic life (*sannyaasa)*. He communicated to his mother his desire of becoming a monk; but she would not give him permission. He was obedient to his mother, believing that in the long run she would give her consent to his plan of becoming an ascetic. There came an occasion when Shankara was having a bath in the river with his mother. A crocodile caught him on the leg and was pulling deep into the river. At this moment Shankara requested his mother to give him permission to become a monk, as he was going to die. Aryamba, reconciling to the fact, gave him permission. Shankara shouted thrice "I have renounced' (*sannyaasthohem*), and the crocodile left him. His mother also allowed him to look for a *Guru*, who would formally initiate him as a *Sannyaasin*. Leaving his mother to the care of his relatives and promising to keep her request of being with her at her death bed and performing her last rites, Shankara went looking for his *Guru*.[21]

After long travels Shankara reached the banks of the river Narmada, where he met the great philosopher and sage Gaudapada, and asked him to initiate him as a monk. Refusing his request Gaudapada directed him to Govindapada, his disciple.[22] Govindapada initiated Shankara into *Brahmavidhya*, and thus Shankara began his training under his guidance. For the next three years Shankara stayed with his *Guru* and gave himself to the practice of meditation and *yoga*, and mastered all scriptures and *yogic* techniques.[23] In doing so Shankara attained complete mystical realization, and Govindapada sent his gifted disciple to Banaaras to teach pure and simple Vedaantic principles.[24]

At Banaaras Shankara was recognized for this wisdom and virtue. Many pupils came to him to listen to his discourses and some of them became his disciples and stayed with him. Some of his admirers and disciples, which included learned pundits and priests, conferred on him the title *Aachariya* (the teacher). Thus, Shankara became Shankaraachaariya.[25] During his stay at Banaaras, Shankara met the great sage Vyaasa, [26] the author of *Brahma-Suutras*, who blessed him with a longer lease of life and commissioned him to use the rest of his life to uproot the doctrines of those who oppose Advaita philosophy, especially those who were deeply rooted in the ritualism of Puurva Miimamsa, and to establish the absoluteness of the Vedaantic teaching of unity of all existence. Accepting Vyaasa commission, Shankara began his missionary journeys for the "spiritual conquest of the whole land of Bhaarat (India)".[27]

Shankara's new mission made him wander as a teacher from place to place engaging in discourses with leaders of other schools, making them realize their erroneous doctrines and practices. Per the direction of Vyaasa, the great sage, Shankara turned his attention to the teachers of Puurva Miimamsa, who had turned Hinduism into mere ritualism. The first person of this school whom Shankara met was Kumarila Bhatta, a confirmed ritualist. After his *gurugula* education, Bhatta disguised himself as a Buddhist monk, learned the logic of

the Buddhist school under a Buddhist *Guru* and used the very logic to defeat Buddhism. In the process Bhatta established the ritualism of Puurva Miimamsa to its glory. But he suffered from a guilt complex because he had sinned against his Buddhist *Guru* (*Guru-dosha*). As a penance (*praayachitta*) he wanted to burn himself in the burning chaff (*tusanala*). It is when Bhatta was at the funeral pyre that Shankara came to meet him. Shankara promised to save him and requested to write an exegesis on his commentary on the *Brahma-Suutra*. But, Bhatta did not wish to escape his self-imposed vow of sacrificing himself for his sin. Instead, he directed Shankara to one of his illustrious disciples Mandana Mishra,[28] to engage him in a debate mediated by Ubhaya-bharati, his wife, who also was a great scholar, acting as the umpire. Bhatta the wanted Shankara to defeat Mandana in the debate, accept him as Shankara's disciple and entrust him with the responsibility of annotating Shankara's works. Having said this to Shankara and listening to his chanting of *Taraka-mantra*, Bhatta gave up his body.[29]

Taking the advice of Kumarila Bhatta seriously, Shankara and his disciples proceeded to meet Mandana Mishra. At their first meeting Shankara expressed his desire to debate with Mandana, to which he agreed readily. It was decided that Ubhaya-bharati, the wife of Mandana, would moderate the debate and that the one defeated would become the disciple of the victor. The debate between them lasted for eighteen days, at the end of which Ubhaya-bharati gave the verdict announcing the defeat of her husband Mandana.[30] Though agreed to the defeat of her husband, Ubhaya-bharati challenged Shankara to have a debate with her, Mandana's partner in life, in order that he could claim complete victory. Shankara consented and was victorious in every aspect of the debate, except Ubhaya-bharati's question about the art of sex love, since he was a *brahmachaari*. Shankara did not admit defeat in the debate, but requested a month's time to study and master the art of love, after which he would continue the debate. Ubhaya-bharati readily agreed to Shankara's proposal. By *yogic* power, Shankara shed his own body and entered the dead body of the King of Amaruka and lived in the palace and learned the art of sex love. After a month he left the body of the king and entered his body that was being cared for by his disciples, and came to Ubhaya-bharati to continue the debate. She did not enter into further discussion, recognizing Shankara's power of transmigration. While she gave up her physical body and ascended into *Brahmaloka*, Mandana became a disciple of Shankara, accepting *sannyaasa*,[31] taking a new name, Sureshvaraa, who later is said to have annotated Shankara's commentary on *Brahma-Suutras*.[32]

From the time of Shankara's victory over Mandana Mishra, until the end of his life, it was a continuous journey accomplishing his mission of eradication of false doctrines. This mission, known as *Dig-Vijayam* (conquest of all quarters), involved meeting learned persons, religious leaders, kings and chieftains, visiting various temples and reforming their administration and religious practices, getting to know people's problems and remedying them. Practically every major temple in India has stories of Shankara's visit to the temple, the reforms he carried out, the hymns he composed to honor the presiding deity of the temple and *darshan* given to both pundits and laymen.[33] The *Dig-Vijayam* of Shankara included journeys to the south, to the north, to the west and to the east of Bhaarat (India). These journeys were never without the dangers of various types, including attempts on Shankara's life by enemies. During these missionary journeys, Shankara and

his disciples visited all of the important towns, temples and other cultural centers of the country, preaching the non-dualistic philosophy of Vedaanta, and reforming the social, cultural and religious life of the people. Despite the seeming differences in customs, traditions and ways of religious practice,[34] Shankara envisaged Bhaarat -- from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari and from Kamaruup (Assam) to Gandhara (Afganistan) -- as one cultural unit, that is based on the principle of the essential oneness of all in *Brahman*. Shankara's *Dig-Vijayam*, i.e., his missionary journeys, was fundamentally aimed at this spiritual conquest of Bhaarat.

Shankara's *Dig-Vijayam* finally took him and his disciples to Kedaarinaath, where he was to experience his final release (*Mahaasamaadhi*). As he sat with his disciples giving them final discourse, King Sudhanva, who was with them, requested Shankara to establish four monasteries (*mutts*) in different parts of Bhaarat, under the leadership of four of his distinguished disciples, so that his wisdom of the scriptures might not be lost, but be preserved for the generations to come through the teacher -- disciple system (*guru-shshya parampara*). Shankara, agreeing to this suggestion, appointed his disciples Padmapada, Sureshvaraa, Hastaamalaka and Totaka to establish *mutts* in the Four Corners of Bhaarat. The *mutts* were to be established at Sringeri in the south, at Puuri in the east, at Dvaarakaa in the west and Baderinaath in the north. Of these the chief was the one at Sringeri. Then Shankara dictated a book entitled *Mahaanusaasanam*, in which he gave all the rules and regulations that were to be followed in the running and administration of these *mutts*. Responding his disciples' final request to teach them the essence of Vedaantic teaching, Shankara chanted *Dasa-Sloki* (ten verses), which he had sung when he first met his *Guru* Govindapada. Shankara advised them that constant meditation on the meaning of these verses would take them to the essence of Vedaantic teaching. After this Shankara went into a prolonged contemplation. Then, using his *yogic* power, he dissolved his human body into the final elements and attained his *Mahasamaadhi*, i.e., his final release. [35] Thus, Shankara's short but active life came to an end at Kedaaarinaath in the Himalayas at the young age of thirty-two.[36]

1.4. Shankara: The Writer and the Interpreter of the Scriptures

Though Shankara's life was brief, his literary output was enormous. During his lifetime Shankara presented himself as the commentator par excellence of the Vedas. Shankarite literature can be grouped into three sections, viz., the commentaries (*Bhaashyas*), books dealing with fundamental concepts of Vedaanta (*Prakriya Granthas*) and hymns and meditation verses (*Stotras*). Shankara wrote about eighteen commentaries. These included the three great institutions of Hindu thought (*Prasthanatrayii*), i.e., *Vedaanta-Suutras*, *Bhagavat Giita* and the Upanishads. Besides, he also wrote commentaries on *Sree Vishnu Shahasranaama* and a few others. The second group of writings of Shankara, which dealt with the fundamental concepts of Vedaanta, are about twenty-three in number. Books, such as, *Viveeka Chuudaamani*, *Aatmabhooda, Upadeeshasaahasrii* and *Mohamuduharam* belong to this group of Shankara's writings. The third group, the *Stotras*, is basically devotional literature used for chanting and meditation. These are about seventy-two in number.[37] This vast literature shows Shankara's place as a great writer and a scholar. Besides being a great writer and scholar, Shankara was an original thinker and a significant interpreter of the

scriptures. In all his major works Shankara formulated an integral, speculative system of great logical subtlety. Though, he gave prime importance to the scriptures, he was not hesitant to use logic and reason to elaborate the doctrine of Advaita on firm philosophical grounds. George Thaibaut, in his introduction to the *Vedaanta-Suutra* notes:

> The doctrine advocated by Shankara, from a purely philosophical point of view, and apart from all theological considerations, is the most important and interesting one which has arisen on the Indian soil; neither those forms of Vedaanta which diverge from the view represented by Shankara, nor any other non-Vedaantic systems, can be compared with the so-called orthodox Vedaanta in boldness, depth and subtlety of speculation.[38]

Though no one denies the philosophical subtlety of Shankara as a commentator of the scriptures, he is not given the prime place by some authors. S.C. Chakravarthi remarks that Shankara was a great intellectual of his time. He was a past master of dialectics. He was well qualified to be the founder of a new system. . . . But when he took upon himself the role of the commentator, he had no right to forget his position and foist upon the Upanishads a philosophy of his own. As an exponent of the art of dialectics he may be looked upon as a great success, but as an interpreter of the Upanishads, he is a huge failure.[39]

S.K. Das shares almost the same view when he says: "He [Shankara] overrides others [other commentators] by the sheer force of his greatness . . . in particular of his logic of absolutism . . . his logic of apprehension. The whole host of other commentators exhibit in their interpretation what may be called the thought-arrested development, . . . [that] they all point by force of their unconscious logic to the Advaita Vedaanta of Shankarite type as their natural culmination."[40] These authors do not seem to recognize Shankara as an authentic interpreter of the Upanishads. However, they accept him as a subtle thinker, who gave a logical and philosophical basis to the later systems of Vedaanta and gave new life to the Hindu Vedic culture through his writings, debates and example.

Our intention, here, is neither to decide whose interpretation of the *Suutras* is superior and faithful to the scripture, nor to respond to the contention of these scholars and thereby to justify Shankara. Yet it should be noted that his interpretation of the scripture is based on his own inner experience and mystical vision of truth. While interpreting the scripture, a religious genius, like Shankara cannot be faithless to his own inner experience of *Brahman*.[41] Thus, though Shankara's interpretation of the scriptures may be different from all others yet it is one that is colored and marked by his own unique experience of the Divine, for the thirty-two years he lived as a human being in the world. Therefore, it has an originality that may be missing in the other interpretations.

1.5. Shankara's Many-sided Personality

S. Radhakrishnan commented on the personality of Shankara: "The many strands of his [Shankara's] personality found their expressions in his writings. . . . his style [of writing] . . . mirrors the qualities of his mind, its force, its logic, its feeling and its sense of humour."[42] Reflecting on the person of Shankara, Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of

independent India, remarks that Shankara is "a curious mixture of a philosopher and a scholar, an agnostic and a mystic, a poet and a saint, and in addition to all this, a practical reformer and an able organizer." [43] In the following pages we could spell out the greatness of Shankara, by exploring his multi-dimensional personality.

1.5.1. Shankara was a great intellectual and a literary figure. The vast literature he has authored speaks to his literary merit. Shankara was a marshal who conquered every intellectual art, whether it was literary forms like prose and poetry, or it was logic, dialectic and the art of debate. He never lacked zeal for learning and never did he claim that he backed something to learn. When he realized, during his debate with Ubhaya-bharati, that he had no experiential knowledge of the art of sex love, he accepted his inexperience and attempted to learn this art by entering the dead body of the king, by using his *yogic* power. It is his desire to learn and the trouble he took to learn, coupled with his great intellectual ability, that made him an intellectual giant. Commenting on the intellectual and literary ability of Shankara, Swami Chinmahananda writes:

> He [Shankara] brought into his work his intellectual dexterity, both in prose and poetry, and in his hands, under the heat of his fervent ideals, the Sanskrit language became almost plastic; he could mold it into any form. From vigorous prose heavily laden with irresistible arguments to flowing rivulets of lifting tuneful songs of love and beauty, there was no technique in language that Shankara did not take up; and whatever literary form he took up, he proved himself to be a master in it. From masculine prose to soft feminine songs, from marching militant verses to dancing, songful words, be he in the halls of Upanishad commentaries or in the temple of *Brahma-Suutra* expositions, in the amphitheater of the *Bhagavat Giita* discourses, or in the open flowery fields of his devotional songs, his was a pen that danced to the rhythm of his heart and to the swing of his thoughts.[44]

1.5.2. Though Shankara had a scientific mind, sharp intellect, and literary dexterity in his writings and had recognized the value of logic in debates and disputations, still he believed that logic is not everything in life. He was basically a mystic, who believed that divinity exists in every person and that all a man is expected to do is to remove the veil of ignorance that hides this fundamental truth. The value of logic basically consists in helping a person to effect this removal of ignorance. Thus, for Shankara, logic is more a means rather than an end: logic is for clarity and precision in understanding the truth; but it cannot replace the stage of contemplation and experience, where the true mystic in each person come alive, and identity with the divine is experienced. To quote Swami Atmananda on this point: "In the course of his commentaries . . . he [Shankara] used his surgical knife of reason. . . . But he boldly held that logic alone would not lead to truth. The bases of logic are observed facts and observation is by the five senses. But there is a sphere beyond the senses and mind . . . [the mystical sphere]. The super conscious truths are beyond logic and thus, he set a limit to the sphere of logic."[45]

1.5.3. Shankara was a proponent of the path of knowledge (*Jnaanayoga*) for the attainment of *Brahman*-realization. He believed that neither *Karmayoga* nor *Bhaktiyoga* could bring

about genuine release (*Samaadhi*), for two reasons. Firstly, both *Karma* and *Bhakti* are finite and so their results, too, have to be finite. Such a finite fruit cannot produce infinite bliss. Secondly, man creates both Karma and Bhakti by his action and so they are bound to be destroyed. Thus, what is destructible cannot produce indestructible bliss.[46] But in *Jnaanayoga*, all we do is remove ignorance by way of physical, moral and intellectual preparations, which, in turn, open the aspirant for self-realization. Thus it is not man's action that effects the final state; but it occurs in the seeker, when ignorance is removed.

Even though Shankara was convinced of the ultimate effectiveness of *Jnaana*, he never proposed the abolition of either *Karma* or *Bhakti*. On the other hand, he encouraged both Vedic rites and devotion to gods as a means to attain higher level of knowledge about *Brahman* because Shankara evaluated people realistically and knew that all would find it hard to pursue the *Jnaana* path. Therefore, both *Karma* and *Bhakti*, if practiced with sincerity, would take the aspirant to the higher level of knowledge. For instance after his debate with Shankara, Mandana Mishra became his disciple and pursued the *Jnaana* path, not because he was defeated by Shankara, but because, he had realized during the debate that the time had come for him to leave the *Karma* path and to move towards the *Jnaana* path. Thus, for Shankara, each path has its own role in the spiritual journey of the seeker; but the *Jnaana* path finally leads one to self-realization.[47]

1.5.4. Such an open attitude prevented Shankara -- though a strict adherent of the true import of the Vedas, i.e., the oneness of everything in *Brahman* -- from being a fanatic, both in his personal living and in his preaching. If we look into the personal life of Shankara, he was a realized *Jnaani*, a *Jiivanmukta*. From the perspective of a *Brahmajnaani*, Vedic rites and sacrifices made no sense for him. *Bhakti* was not a necessity for him, since he was a realized soul. Yet we see Shankara on his journeys visiting every Saivite, Vishnavite or Saakta temple, performing worship (*puuja*) and singing devotional hymns (*stotras*) in praise of the officiating deities. Most of the *stotras* are prayers for the true light of knowledge and discrimination. Not only did he practice it, but he also preached it to others. Both by his example and by his preaching, Shankara took people to the underlying reality of *Brahman*, that is, behind the varied forms of worship and devotion.[48]

The following quotation illustrates this point with great clarity:

> He [Shankara] was not an exclusive Saivite or Vaishnavite or Saakta, and yet when he praised Siva, Vishnu, or Durga in his hymns, he stood to be the best among the Saivites, Vaishnavites and Saaktas, thus setting a model for the respective group for the correct method of worship. Though he was established far above all groupism [by his *Samaadhi*], his magnanimous mind, laden with compassion for ordinary folk, came down many a time to their level, guided them and elevated them in their beliefs and practices, so that they would also reach the supreme understanding of the One Reality [*Brahman*]. In doing so he took meticulous care to remove false notions and superstitions which plagued their respective paths.[49]

1.5.5. Such an open outlook, flexible mind-set and accommodative spirit caused Shankara, the exquisite and original thinker, with a sharp intellect, to be always focused on the vision of truth. Nothing could bias the attitude of Shankara from being a seeker of truth. He was open to the truth, no matter from where it came. This attitude of Shankara is evident from the manner in which he was critical of other schools of Indian thought. He never rejected the value of a system in an outright manner. He always recognized truth in them; he also accepted the logical and argumentative techniques used by each school for the investigation of truth. Shankara never attempted to belittle any system for the sake of destroying its value. He exposed weaknesses in an appropriate manner, simply to point out the right path to people.[50]

We could also illustrate Shankara's absolute commitment to the truth, irrespective of where it came from, with the help of an event that took place in his life. One morning Shankara was going to bathe in the river Ganges. On his way he met a *chandala*, a member of the lowest caste, i.e., an untouchable, who had four dogs with him and was blocking Shankara's way. The caste-prejudice in the blood of Shankara, the *brahmin*, prompted him to ask the *chandala* to get out of his way. The *chandala* replied with two questions: `Whom he was calling to move from -- the body or the soul?' and `if there is one absolute *Brahman* in all, how can there be caste and creed?' These questions opened the mind of Shankara. Recognizing his mistake, he prostrated himself at the feet of the *chandala* and composed the famous *Manisha Panchaka*, the five verses (*slokas*), which have the refrain: "He, who has learned to see the existence of *Brahman* everywhere, is my *Guru* B be he *brahmin* or *chandala*."[51] Thus, Shankara was totally open to the truth whatever its source.

1.5.6. Shankara's total dedication to truth and his willingness to recognize it with humility wherever he found it made him a religious reformer par excellence rather than a rebel. Though many of Shankara's teaching might have been looked as rebellious upon by those whom he opposed, yet the manner in which he exposed their errors and the truth of his philosophical position made him acceptable even to his enemies. He never maliciously belittled the one he was debating. Shankara was more concerned with the spirit of the scriptural teaching rather than the literal import of scriptures. That is why Shankara: while holding on to the oneness of all in *Brahman*, could sing *stotras* to many deities; while accepting the supremacy of the *Jnaanayoga*, he could hold for the relevance of *Karmayoga* and *Bhaktiyoga*; while respecting value of the rules of orthodoxy, Shankara could not recognize them as absolute. It is this attitude that allowed Shankara to break the orthodox rule guiding the order of *Sannyaasins* -- which forbade *Sannyaasins* who had left all *karmas* to perform funeral rites. This he did in order to fulfill the promise he made to his mother that he would be with her at her death bed and conduct her funeral rite. For Shankara, no act would be un-*saastric* (unscriptural), if it would accomplish the true spirit of the scripture.[52] Thus, the main elements of Shankara's reform program for the religious life of his time was to remove all negative aspects from the religious practices and instill the true spirit of the scripture.

1.5.7. Shankara not only planned a genuine reform process of the religious and cultural life of Bhaarat (India), but also he organized it in a systematic way during his lifetime. By his tireless journeys, by his example and teachings, by the removal of erroneous teachings

through numerous debates, and by the voluminous literary output, Shankara actualized his plan for the spiritual conquest. In order to carry out these plans in the future, Shankara authorized the establishment of the *mutts* by his illustrious disciples, gave them direction as to the spiritual life of these *mutts* and instructed how they were to be administered. Thus, Shankara was a meticulous planner and an excellent organizer of his plans, both in his lifetime and after he was gone. Swami Chinmayananda writes the following about Shankara as an organizer:

> He [Shankara] showed himself to be a great organizer, a farsighted diplomat, a courageous hero and a tireless servant of the country. Selfless and unassuming, this mighty angel strode up and down the length and breadth of the country serving his mother land and teaching his countrymen to live up to the dignity and glory of Bhaarat. Such a vast program can neither be accomplished by an individual, nor sustained without institutions of great discipline and perfect organization. Establishing the *mutts*, opening temples, organizing halls of education, and even prescribing certain ecclesiastical codes, this mighty master [Shankara] left nothing undone in maintaining what he achieved.[53]

Thus, Shankara, the teacher, is a many-sided personality. In a short period of approximately twenty active years of mission work, he "practiced several careers, each enough to satisfy an ordinary man."[54] His greatest achievement was the establishment of the monumental system of Advaita Vedaanta, which he based totally on the interpretation of the ancient scriptural texts. He reformed the popular religious groupings of the time, such as Saivism and Vaishnavism. He established the supremacy of *Jnaana* over *Karma* and *Bhakti*. Shankara attempted to give spiritual direction to the people of his time by formulating a philosophy and religion that would give a sense of direction and purpose to their spiritual life. Shankara knew that the highest level, to which he wanted to take everyone, was the mystical experience of identity with *Brahman*. But he was realistic in his perception of human beings, and he attempted to put true spirit into the ritual worship and devotional life of the people in order that they could move towards the true knowledge of *Brahman*.[55] We could sum up the multi-dimensional personality of Shankara in the words of S. Radhakrishnan:

> The life of Shankara, makes a strong impression of contraries. He is a philosopher and poet, a servant and a saint, a mystic and a religious reformer. Such diverse gifts did he possess that different images present themselves, if we try to recall his personality. One sees him in youth, on fire with intellectual ambition, a stiff and intrepid debater; another regards him as a shrewd political genius, attempting to impress upon the people a sense of unity; for a third, he is a calm philosopher engaged in the single effort to expose the contradictions of life and thought with an unmatched incisiveness; for a fourth, he is a mystic who declares that we all are greater than we know. Such indeed was the versatile genius of Shankara.[56]

2. PLAN OF THE WORK

Having looked into Shankara's background, life and his many-sided personality, we could move on to outline a brief plan of this work entitled *Self-realization: The Advaitic Perspective of Shankara*. As the title itself suggests, this work aims at expounding Shankara's concept of self-realization and its attainment. We attempt to do this task in four chapters.

The first chapter, entitled "Self-realization: An Analysis," clarifies the goal, nature and characteristics of self-realization. The goal of *Brahmaanubhava* is the attainment of identity between *Brahman* and *Aatman*, and their inner relationship. The second section highlights the nature of self-realization, especially by expounding the true imports of the four Vedaantic aphorisms (*mahaavaakyas*), and by describing the state of self-realization. The third section of this chapter provides further analysis of the state of *Brahmaabubhava* by elaborating the basic characteristics of self-realization.

The second chapter, entitled "Removal of Ignorance: The Condition for Self-realization," elaborates the nature, cause, consequences and characteristics of the state of ignorance, the removal of which is essential for the attainment of self-realization. The first section deals with the nature and cause of ignorance. The state of ignorance is marked by superimposition. After clarifying the meaning of superimposition, the possibility of *Brahman*, the ultimate reality being superimposed will be discussed. The cause of ignorance and superimposition is the *maayaa*, both in its cosmic and individual aspects. This section will also deal with the meaning, constituents and types of *maayaa*, which consist in the effects of cosmic and individual *maayaa*, which bring about the illusion of cosmic and individual orders of existence, thereby veiling the nature of *Brahman.* The last section of this chapter will explain the state of ignorance further by stating the characteristics of ignorance.

The third chapter, entitled "Path to Self-realization," attempts to propose the path in which the state of ignorance can be removed and the dawn of knowledge can be attained. The first section of this chapter deals with the nature and methods of the path. The nature of the path is analyzed by stating its meaning and distinguishing it from *Brahmaanubhava*. The methods proposed by Shankara are both indirect and the direct. The indirect method consists of *Karmayoga* and *Bhaktiyoga*. According to Shankara, these two ways are limited but can help people to arrive at the direct path to self-realization, viz., the *Jnaana* path. The second section deals with the stages of *Jnaanayoga.* There are threefold preparations in the path of knowledge. The physical preparation is the practice of *Hathayoga*. The moral preparation involves the practice of four instruments of the spiritual path, the practice of four qualities and some other requirements. Having prepared by the physical and moral discipline, the aspirant can begin the intellectual preparation by the study of the scriptures. This stage involves threefold preparations, viz., hearing, reflection and meditation. The third section deals with the end of the path, viz., the release (*Samaadhi*). Firstly, we analyze the meaning and different types of *Samaadhi*, besides dealing with the obstacles that one needs to overcome to attain its final stage. Secondly, we deal with the goal of *Samaadhi*, i.e., the emergence of the *Brahmajnaani* (liberated man). Here, we distinguish the two stages of *Brahmajnaani*, i.e., *Videhamukti* and *Jiivanmukti*. Finally we elaborate on the nature and characteristics of *Jiivanmukta*, i.e., the liberated man still living on earth.

In chapter four, we make an attempt to give a critique of Shankara's philosophy of self-realization. The critique includes a negative and a positive appraisal. The conclusion highlights the relevance of Shankara's philosophy of self-realization for the present day world that is immersed in materialism and consumerism.

NOTES

1. Cf. Swami Atmananda, *Sri Shankara's Teaching in His Own Words*,in *Bhavan's Book Library*, ed. K.M. Munshi and R.R. Diwakar, vol. 52, (Bombay: Baratiya Vidya Bhawan, 1960), p. 38.

2. Madhava-Vidhyaranya, *Shankara-Dig-Vijaya*, trans. Swami Tapasyananda, 3rd ed., (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1986), p. 4 (Hereafter: SDV).

3. Cf. Swami Atmananda, p. 39.

4. Cf. Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, *Shankara: The Missionary,* (Bombay: 1990), p. 7 (Hereafter: SM).

5. Ibid.

6. Swami Atmananda, p. 39.

7. SM, p. 1.

8. There are four castes in the Hindu society. They are the *Brahmins* (the priestly class),the *Kshatriyas* (the rulers), the *Vaisyas* (the artisans) and the *Suudras* (the slaves).

9. SM, p. 18.

10. A sect of *Brahmins*, who are the priestly class of the Hindu society.

11. Cf. SDV, pp. 14-15.; Cf. Also SM, pp. 5, 21.

12. Cf. SDV, p. 17.; Cf. Also SM, pp. 22-23.

13. Cf. Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, (London: George Allen & Unwinn Ltd., 1947), pp. 447-448.

14. We have chosen these dates based on the authority of V. Bhattachariya. He says: "Our old traditions are so divergent that, according to them as well as modern researchers, we shall have to place Shankara some time between 6th century B.C. and 9th century A.D., viz., 6th century B.C., 4th century B.C., 1st century B.C., 4th century A.D., 6th century A.D. and 9th century A.D. (i.e., 788-820). The last date is accepted by many a scholar." Vidhusherhar Bhattachariya, ed. & trans., *The Agamasaastra of Gaudapaada*, (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1943), p. lxxix, no. 8 (Hereafter: ASG).

15. *Upanayanam* is a right of investiture of the sacred thread, by which a Hindu boy is initiated into the *Brahmacharriya Aashrama* and during which he studies the sacred scriptures.

16. Cf. SDV, pp. 27-28.; Cf. Also SM, p. 23.

17. SDV, p. 28.

18. There are differences of opinions among the scholars about the fact of Shankara writing this book at this age. But authors generally accept Shankara's extra-ordinary ability as a boy. Cf. SM, p. 23.

19. Shankara, *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination (Viveeka Chuudaamani)*, trans. Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, (New York: New American Library, 1970), pp. 8-9 (Hereafter: VC).

20. Cf. SDV, pp. 40-42.; Cf. Also SM, p. 25.

21. Cf. SDV, pp. 44-45.; Cf. Also SM, pp. 25-26.

22. Cf. VC, p. 9.

23. Cf. Ibid., Cf. Also SM, p. 28.; Cf. Also SDV, pp. 47-48.

24. Cf. Swami Admananda, p. 33.; Cf. Also SDV, pp. 53-55.

25. Cf. SM, pp. 30-31.

26. Cf. SDV, pp. 70-73.

27. Cf. Ibid., pp. 73-75.

28. Mandana Mishra had several names. Mandana Mishra is the name by which he is known among the scholars. The original name given to him by his parents is Vishvaruupaa. Oomveka is his pet name. After he became the disciple of Shankara, he took the name Sureshvaraa. Cf. SDV, p. 81, fn. 1.

29. Cf. SDV, pp. 75-80.; Cf. Also SM, pp. 34-35.

30. Cf. SDV, pp. 81-104.; Cf. Also SM, pp. 36-38. For the text of the debate between Shankara and Mandana Mishra Cf. SDV, pp. 87-103.; Cf. Also SM, pp. 114-123.

31. Cf. SDV, pp. 110-124.; Cf. Also SM, pp. 38-39.

32. Cf. Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 448.

33. Cf. SM, pp. 40-41.

34. Cf. Ibid., pp. 40-47.

35. Cf. SM, pp. 57-58.; Cf. Also Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 448.

36. Cf. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India*, (London: George Allen & Unwinn Ltd., 1962), pp. 279-282.

37. Cf. SM, pp. 60-64, 129-132.; Cf. Also Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 450. We include a collection of works believed to be written by Shankara in the appendix.

38. George Thaibaut, trans., *The Vedaanta-Suutras with the Commentary by Shankaraachaariya*, *The Sacred Books of the East* (Hereafter: SBE), Vol. XXXIV, ed. F. Max Mueller, (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1890), p. xiv (Hereafter: BSB, Thaibaut).

39. Sures Chandra Chakravarti , *Human Life and Beyond*, (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1947), p. 52.

40. Saroj Kumar Das, *A Study of Vedaanta*, (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1937), pp. 29-30

41. Cf. Troy Wilson Organ, *The Self in Indian Philosophy*, (London: Mouton & Co., 1964), p. 93.

42. Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 450-451.

43. SM, p. 7.

44. SM, pp. 2-3.

45. Swami Atmananda, p. 41.

46. Cf. Ibid., p. 42.

47. Cf. Ibid., pp. 42-43, 44-45, 47-48.

48. Cf. SM, pp. 63-64.

49. SM, p. 64.

50. Cf. Swami Atmananda, p. 45.

51. Cf. Ibid., p. 34.; Cf. Also SM, pp. 31-32.

52. Cf. Swami Atmananda, p. 35.; Cf. Also SM, pp. 43-44.

53. Cf. SM, p. 3.

54. Cf. Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 449.

55. Cf. Ibid., pp. 449-450.

56. Radhakrishnan, S., *The Vedaanta*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1928), p. 16.

CHAPTER ONE

SELF-REALIZATION: AN ANALYSIS

Man can live his life either as entangled with the phenomenal or being open to the noumenal. According to Shankara, man's ultimate destiny does not consist in being caught up in the phenomenal existence, but rather in a depth living, in which, he must experience the source of the universe within himself. The task of man is not to search for his ultimate destiny outside, but to move into himself and discover the ultimate in the cave of his heart. It is not a new knowledge, but a realization of what one really is. It is a self-realization, in which one realizes *Brahman* as one's indwelling spirit (*Aatman*). In this chapter, we deal with the goal, nature and characteristics of self-realization.

1.1. GOAL OF SELF-REALIZATION:

The goal of self-realization is *Brahman*, the ultimate universal spirit behind the universe and *Aatman*, the ultimate principle in the individual. Only when one has true knowledge about both *Brahman* and *Aatman* can one begin to experience the oneness between the two. In this section, we will clarify these two notions in preparation for the analysis of the nature of self-realization.

1.1.1. Brahman:

The word `*brahman*' appears for the first time in the Rig-Veda. Here, it meant sacred knowledge or utterances, which are believed to have magical powers. Initially it meant a `spell' or a `prayer'. Gradually the word `*brahman*' acquired the meaning of the mysterious power of prayer, which can bring about what one wishes to achieve. *Brahmanaaspati* was considered to be the Lord of prayer. In the Braahmanas, `*brahman*' denoted ritual and so was considered omnipotent. In the later thought `*brahman*' meant wisdom or sacred knowledge (*Veda*). Since divine origin is attributed to `*Veda*' or `*Brahman*', it came to be known as the first created thing (*brahmaprathamajam*) and was treated as the creative principle and the cause of existence. In the Upanishads, the word `*brahman*' was used to mean the unitary and supreme reality which is hidden from senses but remains the same and resists change, thereby the knowledge of which frees one from finitude.[1]

The word `*brahman*' is derived from the Sanskrit root `*brimh*' which literally means `to gush forth', `to grow', `to be great' and `to increase'. The suffix `*man*', when added to the root `*brimh*', signifies the absence of limitation. Thus, `*brahman*' means gushing forth, bubbling over and ceaseless growth (*brihattvam*). Shankara derives the word `*brahman*' from the root `*brihati*', which means `to exceed' (*atisayana*) and has the meaning of eternity and purity. So the term `*brahman*' etymologically means that which is absolutely the greatest, the eternal and the pure.[2] `*Brahman*', therefore, denotes "that first . . . reality from which the entire universe of our experience has sprung up."[3] In the words of the *Vedaanta-*

Suutras, "*Brahman* is that omniscient, omnipotent cause from which proceeds the origin of the world."[4] Thus, *Brahman* signifies the absolute and unlimited reality, which forms the substratum and the foundation of the world as we know it, and on which everything depends for its existence. *Brahman* is self-sufficient and does not depend on anything else for its existence. Hence, it must be a spiritual entity since matter is dependent, limited and subject to change. George Thaibaut, in his introduction to the *Vedaanta-Suutras*, says that whatever exists is in reality one, and this one universal being is called *Brahman*. This being is absolutely homogeneous in nature. It is pure Being, Intelligence and Thought. Intelligence or thought is not predicated of *Brahman* as its attribute, but constitutes its substance. *Brahman* is not a being that thinks, but thought itself. It is absolutely destitute of qualities, and whatever qualities or attributes are conceivable can only be denied of it.[5] Thus, *Brahman* is without qualities (*nirgunaa*) and beyond the order of our empirical and worldly experience; so we cannot grasp *Brahman* with our empirical experience. In other words, *Brahman* is *a priori* and cannot be grasped by *a posteriori* or limited experience.

Though *Brahman*, the ultimate reality that underlies the multiplicity of the phenomenal world, cannot be strictly expressed in terms of empirical language, scriptures attempt to describe the reality of *Brahman* in various ways. *Brahma-Suutra* speaks of *Brahman* as: having unlimited extension (*aayaama*) in terms of space and being omnipresent (*sarvagata*); [6] being endless (*ananta*);[7] imperishable (*akshara*);[8] without parts (*niravyava*);[9] without form (*aruupavad*);[10] in itself undifferentiated;[11] plenitude (*bhuuman*);[12] that deludes positive description and that can only be expressed negatively.[13] The Upanishads describe *Brahman* as: `the self devoid of sin';[14] `immediate and indirect';[15] `that which is beyond hunger and thirst';[16] `neither gross nor subtle';[17] `the seer itself unseen';[18] `imperceptible, bodiless';[19] `that great unborn self';[20] `without vital force or mind';[21] `unborn comprising the interior and exterior';[22] `consisting of knowledge only';[23] and `beyond what is known and unknown'.[24] *Bhagavad Giita* speaks of *Brahman* as: `that which is neither born nor dies';[25] `not affected by anybody's sins';[26] `just as air is always in the ether';[27] `that is neither existent nor non-existent';[28] `beginningless and devoid of qualities';[29] `the same in all beings'; [30] and `the supreme Being is different'.[31]

Besides what the three major scriptures speak about *Brahman*, there are also some other descriptions of *Brahman* that are given to the seeker that he may continue in the process of assertion about *Brahman*. This process of assertion provides the seeker with material needed for contemplation and meditation, which would lead to the realization of *Brahman*. Some of the definitions of *Brahman* are the following: *Brahman* is eternal(*nitya*); is not bound by time; imperishable, deathless and changeless; and immaculate (*suddha*) and not affected by any limiting adjuncts. Just as electricity works through different equipment, yet remaining unaffected, so also *Brahman*, though it functions through everything visible, is unaffected by it. *Brahman* is liberated (*vimukta*), i.e., it is not affected by any bondage and enjoys supreme and everlasting freedom. *Brahman* is One (*ekam*). Though due to superimposition, the phenomenal world is projected on *Brahman*, it remains untouched by them. Just as a dream is an expression of mind, so also the plurality of the phenomenal world does not make *Brahman* many, but it remains one. When knowledge dawns, the plurality vanishes and only *Brahman* exists. *Brahman* is unbroken bliss (*akhandaanantam*). Unlike the passing joys derived from material things, the bliss of self-realization is absolute

and eternal. Therefore, the supreme bliss is unbroken and everlasting. *Brahman* is non-dual (*advayam*). Though we refer to *Brahman* as one, we cannot consider it as a unit. The concept of unit would bring in the idea of composition of parts and so be a limitation on *Brahman*. So *Brahman* is spoken of as non-dual. *Brahman* is all pervading (*saravagata*). It alone exists, and it exists everywhere. If it were not so, there would be a place where *Brahman* has no access and it would limit *Brahman*. So it is limitless and all pervading. *Brahman* is formless (*niraakaara*). Since it is all pervading and existing everywhere, it is beyond form. Having a form limits a being. So, limitless *Brahman* is formless. Finally *Brahman* is *satyam -- jnaanam -- aanantam* (truth, knowledge and infinity). *Brahman* is *satyam*, because it is that which remains the same at all times -- in the past, the present and the future. *Brahman* as truth is ever the same and unchanging. *Brahman* as, *jnaanam*, is absolute knowledge. We cannot have knowledge of *Brahman*, as we have knowledge of sound, smell, taste, joys and sorrows; but *Brahman* is unconditional knowledge. Knowing *Brahman*, in the sense of experiencing (*anubhava*), is self-realization. *Brahman* is endless and infinite. Waves have temporary existence, but the sea is permanent. In the same way, the world of phenomenal experience is passing and *Brahman*, the infinite and the endless is the substratum upon which the world appears.[32]

Because of our inability to grasp the true nature of *Brahman* with the help of empirical knowledge, whatever positive descriptions we develop about *Brahman* in the light of the scriptural knowledge will remain in the level of phenomenal experience. As *Brahman* is beyond the phenomena, so is it beyond empirical knowledge. This is the reason why we find contrary characteristics attributed to *Brahman*. In Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad, we read that *Brahman* is "light and not light, desire and absence of desire, anger and absence of anger, righteousness and absence of righteousness."[33] Kaatha Upanishad speaks of *Brahman* as "smaller than the small, greater than the great, sitting yet moving, lying and yet going everywhere."[34] *Brahman* is light and not light in the sense that it is only because there is *Brahman* that there is light and darkness. Again there exist small and great only because *Brahman* exists.

At the same time the word `existence' cannot be attributed to *Brahman* and to the empirical world in the same way, for *Brahman's* existence is of a different nature. The existence of *Brahman* is opposed to all empirical existence, so that in comparison with this it can just as well be considered as non-existence. *Brahman* is the Being of all beings.[35] The nature of *Brahman* is so transcendent that it cannot be compared with anything in the world we know. At the same time, *Brahman* is present in all its manifestations, for without the Being of *Brahman* nothing can exist. Yet the empirical experience of *Brahman* is not possible. Thus, *Brahman* is that unalterable and absolute Being, which remains identical with itself in all its manifestations. It is the basis and ground of all experience, and is different from the space-time-cause world. *Brahman* has nothing similar to it, nothing different from it, and no internal differentiation, for all these are empirical distinctions. It is non-empirical, non-objective and wholly other, but it is not non-being.[36]

Shankara repeatedly speaks of and strongly defends the absolute, unchangeable and attributeless nature of *Brahman*, alluding to many texts in the scripture, which point to the *nirgunaa Brahman*.[37] Shankara, commenting on the Upanishadic text, "as a lump of salt is

without interior or exterior, entire and purely saline taste, even so is the self (*Brahman*) without interior or exterior, entire and pure intelligence alone",[38] points to the oneness of *Brahman*. In the lump of salt there is nothing other than salt, so too *Brahman* is nothing other than itself. It is the absolute being without a second.[39] Shankara uses the example of the sun reflecting on water and appearing as many, in order to express the same truth. He says that the self is just like the reflection of the sun on water which increases with the volume of water and decreases with its reduction, which moves when the water moves, and which differs as the water differs. The sun seems to conform to the characteristics of water, but in reality the sun never has these increasing or decreasing qualities. So also, from the highest point of view, *Brahman* always retains its sameness; it seems to conform to such characteristics as increase and decrease of the limiting adjunct, owing to its entry into such an adjunct as a body.[40]

We can give a few more illustrations to indicate the unitary, unchanged and unaffected nature of *Brahman*. Many candles can be lit from the flame of a single candle. The flame of the first candle is not less because it has given light to many candles. In the same way, though infinite names and forms are drawn out of *Brahman*, it remains ever the same. Likewise, cotton is made into thread and cloth. Thread is drawn from cotton and is woven into cloth. But the reality of cotton is in both of these forms, viz., thread and cloth. Similarly, the projections of names and forms of this material world on *Brahman* do not alter the nature of *Brahman*. It remains as it is without any change. We can also illustrate the uniqueness of *Brahman* by analyzing the phenomenon of dreams. Dream objects and dreams are an internal projection upon the mind of a person. Varieties of things emerge from a person's mind and form the dream. The emergence of the dreams does not make any difference to the mind. The mind remains unchanged and unaffected by the dream, even though both the dream objects and the dreams are aspects of the mind. The dreamer would not realize that dream objects and the dreams are simply aspects of the mind unless he wakes up from the dream. Once the dreamer wakes up, he realizes that the unchanging reality behind the external manifestations is the mind. In the same way varieties of beings are nothing but different aspects of *Brahman*. As long as a person is caught up in the phenomenal existence, he does not see the unity behind the multiplicity. When one wakes up to the noumenal level he experiences the one, non-dual *Brahman*.[41]

Thus, *Brahman* is supreme. It is the reality. It has no beginning and end. It is eternal and beyond the reach of pain. *Brahman* is indivisible, unmeasurable, without names and forms. It cannot be avoided, as it is present everywhere. *Brahman* cannot be grasped, as it is transcendent. It cannot be contained in anything, as it contains everything. *Brahman* is indefinable, for it is beyond the range of mind and speech. Thus, *Brahman* is reality itself, pure and absolute consciousness.[42] Parthasarathy sums up the nature of *Brahman* as follows:

> Reality [*Brahman*] is defined as that which persists. That which exists in all periods of time. Remains the same in the past, present and future. Reality [*Brahman*] exists both in the manifest and the unmanifest. The world arises out of the Reality [*Brahman*]. Exists in Reality [*Brahman*]. Merges back into Reality [*Brahman*]. Reality [*Brahman*] is the substratum and the structure.

> Reality [*Brahman*] is like the ocean. Exists in ocean. Merges back into ocean. Similarly the world is nothing but Reality [*Brahman*]. Everything is Reality [*Brahman*].[43]

Therefore, *Brahman* is a principle of utter simplicity. There is no duality in *Brahman*, for no qualities are found in the concept of *Brahman*. It is also simple in the sense that it is not subject to inner contradictions, which would make it changeable and transitory. Though Shankara uses logic and arguments to understand the nature of *Brahman* and to speak of it, still, for him, *Brahman,* in its reality, is not a metaphysical postulate that can be proved logically, but it must be experienced in silence. [44] Thus, *Brahman* is one: It is not a `He', a personal being; nor is it an `It', an impersonal concept. It is that state which comes about when all subject-object distinctions are obliterated. Ultimately, *Brahman* is a name for the experience of the timeless plentitude of Being.[45]

1.1.2. Aatman

The term `*Aatman*' comes from the Sanskrit root `*an*', which etymologically means "to breathe". So `*Aatman*' is the breath of life. In the course of the usage, it means life, soul, self or the essential being of an individual. Shankara derived `*Aatman*' from the Sanskrit root which meant `to obtain', `to eat or enjoy' or `to pervade all'. So for Shankara, `*Aatman*' is the principle of an individual's life, the soul that pervades his being, his breath (*praana*) and his intellect (*prajnaa*), and that which transcends all these. A negative sense, *Aatman* is that which persists and remains when the non-self is removed. In the Rig-Veda there is a reference to the unborn (*ajo bhaagah*) and the immortal element in man. This element in man is *Aatman*. The body, the mind, the life and the intellect are forms and external expression of the *Aatman*.[46]

The reality and existence of *Aatman*, the most fundamental being of the individual, cannot be questioned, for this truth is self-evident. In fact, the self does not need any proof. Even the Vedas do not prove the existence of the self; as they only reveal the unknown or implied meaning of the scriptural texts. Thus, the self is self-evident, and no one can deny its existence for it is the basis of all individual actions. Everyone is conscious of the existence of his self and never thinks that he is not.[47] To doubt the existence of the self would be a contradiction in terms because then one would doubt the existence of the very doubter who engages in doubt. The doubter of the self is often compared by the Advaitins to a person who searches for the necklace while wearing it or to a person who wears the spectacles on his face and at the same time looks for them elsewhere. Without the existence of the self, it is impossible for us to entertain the idea or even to be capable of refutation. Because the knowledge of the self is not established through the so-called means of right knowledge, it is self-established.[48] Thus, the very existence of understanding and its functions presuppose the intelligence known as the self, that is self-established, different from these functions and on which they depend.[49] Both the possibility of knowledge and the means of knowledge (*pramaanas*) have relevance if there would be the self that is the source of all knowledge. Therefore, *Aatman* is beyond all doubt, "for it is the essential nature of him who denies it."[50] Therefore, Shankara believed that it was the nature of the

self, not its reality or existence, which is to be proved. "The self must seek itself in order to find what it is, not that it is."[51]

Having established the existence of the self, we can turn to the discussion of the nature of *Aatman*. Shankara, speaking of the nature of *Aatman*, gives the following description:

> What then is the self? It is the innermost, all pervading, like the ether, subtle, eternal, without any parts, without qualities, spotless, having no abilities like going and coming, etc., devoid of ideas of `me' and `mine' and also of desire, aversion and effort, self-effulgent by nature like the heat of fire or like the light of the sun, having no connection with the elements such as ether, etc., possessing no organs like the intellect, etc., free from *gunnaas* of *sattva*, etc., and not having *praanas* and other vital airs. It is untouched by hunger and thirst, by grief and delusion and by old age and death, the characteristics respectively of vital force, the intellect and the body. It is the self, which resides in the hearts of all beings and is the seer of all intellects.[52]

Therefore, for Shankara, *Aatman* is the deathless, birthless, eternal and real substance in every individual soul. It is the unchanging reality behind the changing body, sense organs, mind and ego. It is the spirit, which is pure consciousness and is affected by time, space and causality. It is limitless and without a second.[53] In order to understand the true nature of *Aatman* one must discriminate the innermost self from outer physical and mental coverings just as one separates the rice from the husk or exposes the pure white kernel from the coconut by removing the outer husk.[54] *Aatman* is distinct from the body, sense organs, the mind, intellect and desires (*vasanaas*), and at the same time is the substratum of all activities that emanate from these physical and mental faculties. Though *Aatman* is the activity principle, it ever remains detached and independent of these activities. It is a witness to all these activities. In the same way, the all-pervading *Aatman* directed all the three states of consciousness, namely, the waking state (*vishva*), the dream state (*taijasa*), and the deep-sleep state (*praajna*). The basic underlying principle, which witnesses all three states of one's existence and the activities of the physical and mental faculties, is the pure consciousness (*chaitanyam*), the self. It is because of the presence of this ultimate substratum that the body, the senses, the mind and the intellect function properly. At the same time, the self is not identified with any of these and not affected by the changes that take place in the body, senses, mind and intellect. Thus, the self belongs to a level higher than these three states, i.e., the Fourth State. In the Fourth State, the self is pure consciousness like a homogenous piece of gold. The Fourth State is nothing else but the witness of the three states, being unaffected by the changes that take place in these states.[55] Therefore, *Aatman* is the "unrelated witness of the experiences of the three states, which include a man's diverse activities."[56]

Shankara gives a number of illustrations to clarify the nature of the self, especially in its role of being the witness to all activities of body, senses, mind and the intellect. Firstly, Shankara gives the analogy of a king's court. In the court, the king sits in his high throne as the observer of the activities of his ministers, councilors and all the others present. Because of his majesty as the king, he is unique and different from all. So, too, the self, that is pure

consciousness, dwells in the body as a witness to the functions of the body, mind and other faculties, while at the same time it is different from them by its natural light. Thus, the witness is the absolute consciousness, the unchanging intelligence that underlies the finer and the gross bodies. It is neither *Iisvara* nor the *jiiva*, but it is *Aatman*, which is untouched by the distinction of *Iishvara* and *jiiva*.[57]

To those who come with the objection that the self is not only a mere observer or a witness, but also participates in the activities of the body, Shankara replies, using the analogy of the moon and the clouds. The movement of the clouds on a moonlit night suggests that the moon is moving, whereas in fact the clouds move. Likewise, the activities of the senses and the mind create the illusion that the self is active.[58] The reason for the illusion is the focus of attention either on the clouds or on the moon. If our attention were fixed on the clouds, then we would notice the moon as moving. On the other hand, if we shift our attention from clouds to the moon, we will see the clouds moving. In the same way, one experiences the *Aatman* as active because his attention is centered on the physical and mental faculties. If one shifts the attention from these faculties to the *Aatman*, he would realize that the activities belong to the physical and mental faculties, not to the self.[59] Commenting on this analogy Parthasarathy says:

> The metaphor of the clouds [and the moon] suggests a few more interesting comparisons. For instance, you notice the motion of the clouds because the moon remains motionless in the background. Any motion is recognized only with reference to a motionless factor. Similarly, you perceive changes occurring in the different layers of human personality, because of a changeless substratum, which is the supreme self. Furthermore the clouds themselves are visible only in the light of the moon. Likewise you are conscious of the human equipments and their activities because of the pure consciousness, the supreme self.[60]

To those who would say that the activity belongs to the senses or other faculties and would consider the self as powerless, Shankara gives the following illustrations. Just as the iron filings become active at the presence of the magnet, so also the presence of the self activates the body, the senses and all the other faculties. It is the fire that makes the iron ball red-hot. The mind, the intellect and the body, all combined cannot make the self, rather, the self is the source of all their activities. A man works with the help of the light that is inherent in the sun and does so without ever affecting the sun. In the same way, the mind, the body, the intellect and the senses engage in their respective *activities* with the help of the self, but without exerting any influence on the self. [61]

Shankara also gives a number of other illustrations to show the absolute nature of *Aatman*. An ignorant person may identify the clay with the pot and gold with an earring, forgetting that the pot and the earring are not clay and gold, respectively; rather, they are only manifestations of clay and gold. Similarly, one may identify the empirical ego with *Aatman*, ignorantly without knowing the real nature of *Aatman*.[62] Again out of a person's ignorance, he may attribute blueness, concavity and similar qualities to the sky, even though the sky does not have any such qualities. In the same way, a person walking in a desert may

perceive water in a mirage by wrong perception. Likewise, in semi-darkness one can perceive a human figure in a post. All such perceptions are illusory. So also the perception of *Aatman* as identical with the elements of this world is illusory.[63] Just as perceptions of a castle in the air and a second moon in the sky are illusory, so also the perception of *Aatman* as identical with the world is unreal.[64]

All these illustrations point to the basic and absolute nature of *Aatman*. The following Upanishadic statement bears witness to this fact: "That imperishable is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the ununderstood understander. Other than It, there is naught that hears; other than It, there is naught that thinks; other than It, there is naught that understands."[65] Thus, *Aatman* is the absolute consciousness, the source of all knowledge.

Shankara, in his celebrated work *Aatmabhooda* gives a number of brief descriptions of *Aatman* that clearly point to its absolute nature. These descriptions tell what *Aatman* is in itself. There are three verses that contain these descriptions about the nature of *Aatman*. We could briefly state these verses and clarify each of these descriptions of *Aatman*.

> As luminosity is the nature of the sun, coolness of the water and heat of fire, so existence-knowledge-bliss, eternity and purity are the nature of *Aatman*.[66]
>
> I am [*Aatman* is] without attributes and actions, eternal, without doubts, unsullied, changeless, formless, ever free and pure.[67]
>
> Like space I [*Aatman*] pervade [pervades] everything inside and outside. Never fallen, same in all, . . . eternal, unattached, pure and motionless.[68]

The first verse considers the essential nature (*swaabha*) of *Aatman* in comparison with that of the sun, water and fire. The essential nature of the sun, water and fire are luminosity, coolness and heat respectively. Similarly, the nature of *Aatman* is existence-knowledge-bliss (*Satchitaananda*), eternity (*nitya*) and purity (*nirmala*). *Satchitaananda* describes *Aatman* as manifesting through the equipments of the gross, subtle, and causal bodies. Through the gross body the *Aatman* expresses itself as mere existence (*sat*), and thereby brings existence to the infinite variety of inanimate realities spread over the universe. Through the subtle body *Aatman* manifests itself as intelligence (*chit*) to awaken that one. *Aatman* manifests itself in the causal body as the bliss (*aananda*) in beings that are asleep and enjoy relative peace. Thus, the entire cosmos is nothing but the aspects of *Aatman* expressed in the totality of the material bodies as *Sat-chit-aananda*. Again as eternal (*nitya*), *Aatman* has its existence in relation to the totality of time, i.e., it has existed from the infinite past, is existing in the present and will continue to exist in the ages to come. *Aatman* is spoken of as *nirmala*. This word is opposite to `*mala*' which means `dirty'. So *nirmala* refers to the absence of every type of *vaasanas*, which pollute *Aatman*. Thus, *Aatman* is the spiritual core of an individual, and that beyond every sheath consisting of *vaasanas*.[69]

The second verse gives a number of descriptions about the all-pervading *Aatman*. Firstly, *Aatman* is `without attributes' (*nirgunaa*). These descriptions point to the fact that *Aatman* is not at all touched by the influence of the threefold *gunaas*, viz., *sattva* (pure and noble); *rajas* (active and agitated); and *tamas* (dull and inactive). The self is distinct from the *gunaas* because the former is imperishable, while the latter is perishable. Secondly, the self is described as `without activities' (*nishkriya*). Though *Aatman* causes the body, the mind and the intellect to act, it is without any activity. Just as electricity makes a fan rotate, while it itself is running motionless, so also *Aatman* while moving the physical and mental faculties, remains without any activity. Thirdly, *Aatman* is `without doubt' (*nirvikalpa*). It is the opposite of `*vikalpa*', which means `doubt', `uncertainty' or `indecision' of the mind. It is *Aatman* that enlivens the mind, by illuminating thoughts, when it is in moments of doubt and indecision. Therefore, *Aatman* is *nirvikalpa*. Fourthly, *Aatman* isunsullied (*niranjaana*). `*Anjaana*' means `dirt' or `stain' and, in fact, is nothing else but *vaasanas*. They are inherent tendencies that mark the empirical personality (*jiiva*). So *niranjaana* means that *Aatman* is beyond the coverings of the *vaasanas*. Fifthly, *Aatman* is changeless (*nirvikara*). The physical and mental faculties are ever-changing. *Aatman*, the pure self, is that changeless substratum upon which all the changes of the body, mind and intellect take place. Just as the sun remains steadfast and causes the earth and other planets to move around it, so also *Atman* remains steadfast amidst the changes of the body, mind and intellect, and causes these changes in them. Finally, *Aatman* is ever free (*nitya mukta*). Unlike the physical body that is limited by its perceptions, the mind by its emotions and the intellect by its thoughts, the *Aatman* is independent of these faculties and their activities. Thus, self remains ever free. The *Aatman* is like the sun; it shines above and thus is ever free from any type of limitation.[70]

The third verse compares *Aatman* to space on two points. Firstly, both space and the self are all pervading. Secondly, space allows things to exist in it without itself being conditioned by them. In the same way, though the self is the substratum of bodily perceptions, mental emotions and intellectual thoughts, it is not contaminated by them in any way, as a higher spiritual reality can never be limited by a gross or a subtle body. Therefore, *Aatman* is not fallen or is perfect (*achyuta*). Self is the unchanging reality amidst the various activities of the physical and mental faculties in various states of existence. Though it may appear that self is limited by individuality, it never falls into the limitation of the individual. Again *Aatman* is the same for all (*sarvasama*). One may falsely conclude that there are many *Aatmans* who function in the variety of living creatures. But the *Aatman* is the same for all living beings. Just as the same electricity functions and expresses itself in the working of the different electrical equipment differently, so also the one and the same *Aatman* works heterogeneously in different human faculties. *Aatman* is the final state of accomplishment, completion and fulfillment (*siddha*). Attainment of *Aatman* is the state of highest perfection. There is nothing beyond *Aatman* because it is the highest state of human evolution. *Aatman* is unattached to anything (*nissanga*). It is not attached to the body, mind, intellect and the three states of existence. It is the silent and detached witness of the functioning of the body, mind, intellect and the experiences of the *jiiva* in the three states of existence. Finally, *Aatman* is motionless (*achala*), as it is an all-pervading reality that is omnipresent and eternal. As there is no place that is without *Aatman* and no time -- the past, the present and the future -- without the reality of *Aatman*, it is motionless.[71]

All these descriptions of *Aatman* clearly speak of its nature, as the self-existent reality, pure and eternal consciousness, birthless and deathless supreme Being, that is the source and foundation of all that exist. Now that we have analyzed the nature of *Brahman* and *Aatman*, we can spell out the relationship between them, in the next section.

1.1.3. *Brahman* and *Aatman*

From the Advaitic perspective of Shankara, the terms `*Brahman*' and`*Aatman*' basically denote one and the same underlying principle: the former stands for the underlying and unchanging principle of the universe; while the latter refers to the unchanging reality in the individuals. Both of these terms are used in the Upanishads and understood by the interpreters as synonyms. They are even interchanged in the same sentence to mean each other. Commenting on the Upanishadic statement "Who is *Aatman*? What is *Brahma*?" [72] Shankara remarks: "By *Brahman*, the limitations implied in the *Aatman* are removed, and by the *Aatman* the conception of *Brahman* as the divinity to be worshipped is condemned."[73] Thus, for Shankara, both *Brahman* and *Aatman* are one and the same. He comments on this point in his *Brahma-Suutra Bhaashya* as follows:

> As to that *Brahman* does exist as a well-known entity -- eternal, pure, intelligent, free by nature and all knowing and all-powerful. For from the very derivation of the word `*Brahman*', the ideas of eternity, purity, etc., become obvious. . . . Besides, the existence of *Brahman* is well-known from the fact of Its being the self of all; for everyone feels that his self exists, and he never feels, `I do not exist'. Had there been no general recognition of the existence of the self everyone would have felt, `I do not exist'. And that self is *Brahman*.[74]

Shankara again reiterates this fact in his book *Viveekachuudaamani* as follows:

> What can break the bondage and misery in the world? The knowledge that *Aatman* is *Brahman*. . . . Realize *Brahman*, and there will be no more returning to this world. . . . You must realize absolutely that *Aatman* is *Brahman*. Then you will win *Brahman* forever. He is the truth. He is existence and knowledge. He is absolute. He is pure and self-existent. He is eternal, unending joy. He is none other than the *Aatman*.[75]

Both of these declarations of Shankara clearly indicate the fact that he perceived *Brahman* and *Aatman* as one and the same. Following the comment of Shankara very closely, S. Radhakrishnan speaks the following regarding the relationship between *Brahman* and *Aatman*:

> Just as, in relation to the universe, the real is *Brahman*, while name and form are only manifestations, so also the individual egos are the varied expression of the one universal self. As *Brahman* is the eternal quiet underneath the drive and activity of the universe, so *Aatman* is the foundational reality underlying the conscious powers of the individual, the inward ground of

human soul. . . . [These make the] ultimate depth to our life below the plane of thinking and striving.[76]

This Advaitic teaching is not a mere fabrication of the ingenious mind of Shankara, but it has a foundation in the Upanishads. The Upanishads teaches that *Aatman* is the principle of individual consciousness, while *Brahman* is the super-personal foundation of the cosmic universe. But this separation soon vanishes in the Upanishadic teaching and both of these principles are identified; *Brahman*, the first principle of the universe, is known through *Aatman*, the inner self of man.[77] *Chaandoogya Upanishad* states this truth: "Verily this whole world is *Brahman*. . . . This soul of mine within the heart, this is *Brahman*."[78] Again the Upanishadic sayings indicate the identity of the *Aatman* with *Brahman* "That person who is seen in the eye, He is *Aatman*, that is *Brahman*",[79] "This is your self that is within all",[80] "This is the internal ruler, your own immortal self"[81] and "That is truth, that is the self and That thou art."[82] From what we have said it is clear that the *Brahman-Aatman* doctrine is deeply founded in the teaching of the Upanishads from the earlier times and reached its culmination in the teachings of Shankara.[83]

Thus, we can conclude that these two terms fundamentally refer to one and the same reality which is the ground of everything. In other words, these two terms stand for two different descriptions of the same ultimate reality, from the points of view of the universe and of the individual. The ultimate reality represented by these two terms is the goal of self-realization, which is our concern in the next section.

1.2. NATURE OF SELF-REALIZATION

We have analyzed the goal of self-realization in the preceding section. Here we must attempt to clarify its nature, in which *Brahman*-realization is attained by the seeker. We elaborate the nature of self-realization by looking into its meaning, clarifying the identity between *Brahman* and *Aatman* and by describing the state of self-realization.

1.2.1. Meaning of Self-realization

Self-realization is the ultimate state of man. It is a state in which one realizes *Brahman* as one's own innermost self. So it is also called *Brahmaamubhava*. The term `*Brahmaanubhava*' is a compound word, which consists of two Sanskrit words, viz., `*Brahman*' (absolute reality) and `*anubhava*' (intuitive experience or knowledge). The term `*anubhava*' means not a mere theoretical or intellectual knowledge, but the knowledge obtained through an integral experience. *Anubhava* is not the immediacy of an uninterrupted sensation, where the existence and the content of what is apprehended are separated. It is related to artistic insight rather than to animal instinct. It is an immediate knowledge.[84] Thus, literally the term `*Brahmaanubhava*' means the `integral and intuitive experience of the absolute reality'. When we speak of the intuitive experience of *Brahman*, from the Advaitic point of view there arise many basic questions as to the nature of *Brahmaanubhava*. How is it possible to have an experience if there is no subject to experience and no object to be experienced? Besides, if there is no duality in an experience, how can it be described? If *Brahmaanubhava* is an experience, and if it has no duality in

itself as an experience, then what is the nature of the experience involved in *Brahmaanubhava*? These questions stem from the fact that the Advaita philosophy of Shankara does not permit the possibility of duality in this fundamental experience. As we move on with the clarification of the nature of self-realization, some of these questions will be answered.

In order to attain self-realization one must first possess intellectual knowledge about the nature of *Brahman*, *Aatman* and *Brahmaanubhava*. Obtaining intellectual knowledge by studying the scriptures, especially by understanding the meaning and import of the Vedaantic statements (*mahaavaakyas*) like `That art Thou', is necessary for self-realization. In knowing the nature of *Brahman* and *Aatman* intellectually, one can work towards the attainment of *Brahmaanubhava*. When we speak of the attainment of *Brahmaanubhava*, we use the term `attainment' (*labdha*) in the figurative sense (*upachara*).[85] In the empirical experience we attain some new knowledge, i.e., knowledge which had not previously existed as far as we were concerned. In self-realization, however, one does not attain anything new, but only realizes what one is, i.e., his identity with *Brahman*. According to Shankara, self is *Brahman*, and self-realization is that experience by which one realizes one's own real nature.

Many texts in Shankara's works point to the fact that the attainment of *Brahmaanubhava* consists in the recognition and the realization that one's real and true nature is *Brahman*. "The state of being *Brahman* is the same as the realization of the self."[86] "Perfect knowledge . . . is the realization of the *Aatman* as one with *Brahman*."[87] "When a man knows the *Aatman* and sees it inwardly and outwardly as the ground of all things animate and inanimate, he has indeed reached liberation."[88] "No man who knows *Brahman* to be different from himself is a knower of truth."[89] "My self is pure consciousness, free from all distinctions and suffering."[90] Thus, *Brahmaanubhava*, which is the experience of identity of the *Aatman* with the *Brahman*, is an attainment only from the point of view of the aspirant or the seeker of truth. From the absolute (*paramaartha*) point of view there is no attainment, as nothing new is attained, for it is only a self-realization.

From what we have said about the nature of *Brahmaanubahva*, there arises the question of the possibility of having any knowledge about this experience, as no empirical knowledge (*pramaana*) can help us in this regard. Only scriptural knowledge can help us to enter into the realm of *Brahmaanubhava*. Though scriptural knowledge is limited to duality, still it provides the knowledge about the reality of *Brahman* and *Aatman* and an intellectual understanding of *Brahmaanubhava.* Shankara affirms the authority of the scriptural testimony in our intellectual understanding of *Brahman*. Nothing but the scriptures can reveal the nature of self-realization, as Shankara clearly asserts. He does not substitute any *pramaana* for the scriptural testimony to attain intellectual knowledge about *Brahman*. He uses other *pramaanas*, but only to elucidate, clarify and demonstrate what he accepts on the basis of scriptural authority about *Brahman*, *Aatman* and *Brahmaanubhava*. He says: "The fact of everything having its self in *Brahman* cannot be grasped [intellectually], without the aid of scriptural passage `That art Thou'."[91] For the word `*Upanishad*' (scripture) derives its meaning from its capacity to lead to the truth those of us who, having been thoroughly dissatisfied with the things seen and unseen, seek liberation from

ignorance, which is the source of bondage and suffering. The Upanishads are capable of accomplishing all these, for in them the highest end of life is embodied.[92] The scriptural knowledge of self-realization is contained in the Upanishadic statements, i.e., Vedaantic aphorisms: self-realization consists in the experience of the identity of *Brahman* and *Aatman*. In the next section, we study self-realization in terms of the exegesis of the Vedaantic aphorisms regarding identity.

1.2.2. Self-realization: Identity of *Brahman* and *Aatman*

Many texts of the scripture speak of *Brahman*, *Aatman* and *Brahmaanubhava*, of which four Vedaantic aphorisms (*mahaavaakyas*) point to the nature of self-realization. These four statements are found, one each, in each of the Vedas. They are:

Consciousness is *Brahman* (*Prajnaanam Brahmaa*)[93]

That art Thou (*Tat tvam asi*)[94]

This Self is *Brahman* (*Ayam Aatma Brahman*)[95]

I am *Brahman* (*Aham Brahma Asmi*)[96]

Shankara is of the opinion that these *mahaavaakyas* are essential, not merely figurative, statements about *Brahman*. That assert the absolute identity between *Brahman* and *Aatman* which alone constitutes self-realization. We could briefly explain the import of these Vedaantic statements and, thereby attempt to clarify the nature of *Brahmaanubhava*.

1.2.2.1. Consciousness Is *Brahman*

This aphorism appears in the Aitariya Upanishad of the Rig-Veda. This *mahaavaakya* declares in a general way that the consciousness, i.e., the *Aatman*, is *Brahman*. In other words, it pronounces that the consciousness in the individual is the same as the universal consciousness that underlies the universe. Thus, this Vedaantic aphorism announces that consciousness is the fundamental substratum of both the microcosm and the macrocosm. Consciousness can be compared to space. The individual consciousness is like a space in a pot or in a room, but universal consciousness is like the total space. Even if we separate space into different spaces due to our perception, we cannot really segregate the space in the pot or in the room from the total space, since space is a homogeneous entity. In the same way, we can give various names to consciousness in relation to different embodiments. But consciousness is a homogeneous and all-pervading absolute reality, which is identical with *Brahman*. As this *mahaavaakya* gives a general declaration or definition of self-realization, as consciousness is *Brahman*, it is called `the statement of definition' (*lakshana vaakya*).[97]

1.2.2.2. That Art Thou

This *mahaavaakya* is found in the Chaandoogya Upanishad in Saama Veda. It is a universal pronouncement to humankind that the core of each person, i.e., the *Aatman*, is *Brahman*, the supreme reality. In other words, this aphorism explains to each one that his own self pervades everywhere as the absolute *Brahman*. The analogy of water can explain the import of this statement from the scripture. Water from the sea evaporates and forms clouds, and returns to the earth as rains. The rainwater is collected and the form a river, which in the course of its flow assumes individual names. But the water in all these conditions is the same. In the same way, *Aatman* is the all-pervading reality, viz., *Brahman*. This aphorism, thus, pronounces the oneness of the infinite *Brahman* and *Aatman* in the individual. Moreover, it advises the seeker of self-realization to recognize his *Aatman* as identical with *Brahman*; it is called `the statement of advice' (*upadeesa vaakya*).[98] Since this *mahaavaakya* "*Tat tvam asi*' is an important identity statement, we analyze the meaning of the words contained in it.

Before entering into the discussion of the meaning of this Vedaantic statement, we need to consider the type of meanings a word or a sentence can have or the different senses in which it can be used, which according to Advaitins, can be of three types. Firstly, the primary or direct meaning (*vaachyaartha*) is conveyed by the word. Secondly, the implied meaning (*lakshana* or *lakshyaartha*), is conveyed by way of implication. Thirdly, the suggested meaning (*vyakthaartha*), is hinted by association.[99] Having clarified the various senses in which a word can be used, we could examine the meaning of the words contained in the *mahaavaakya*, viz., `*tat*' (`That'), `*tvam*' (`Thou') and `*asi*' (art).

According to Shankara the word `*tat*' (`That') in its primary sense refers to *Iisvara*, the *sagunaa Brahman*,endowed with qualities of omniscience and omnipotence, who has lordship over the gross, subtle and causal bodies, which are the result of collective *maayaa*. In other words, the term `That' in its direct meaning refers to the personal God who is the creator, the preserver and the destroyer of the universe.[100] The word `*tvam*' (`Thou') directly refers to the willing hearer of the scriptures as taught by the *Guru*. Thus, `Thou' refers to the individual ego (*jiiva*) which is associated with the individual body and everyday existence. *Jiiva*, referred to by the word `Thou' is conditioned by threefold miseries, viz., the misery of the body and the mind, the misery arising from perishable creatures and the misery arising from the action of gods. As a result, the *jiiva* is characterized by the limitations, such as birth and death, hunger and thirst, pain and pleasure. Besides, its existence is marked by the three states of existence, viz., waking, dream and deep sleep, and a multiplicity of other activities of phenomenal existence. Thus, the primary meaning of the word "*tvam*' is *jiiva,* which is limited by the gross, subtle and causal bodies, has partial knowledge of the self and the universe, and is conditioned by individual ignorance. The term `*asi*' (art) merely states a complete identity of `That' and `Thou. Thus, in the direct meaning the Vedaantic saying `*tat tvam asi*' (That art Thou) points to the identity between *Iishvara* and jiiva.[101]

But explicit meaning of the saying `That art Thou', namely, the identity between *Iishvara* and *jiiva* does not seem to agree with the actual fact, since such an identity is not possible. *Iishvara* and *jiiva* are too separated and different from each other, for the former is the powerful and supreme Lord, while the latter is the limited worshipper of *Iishvara*.

Therefore, absolute identity between them seems to be impossible. Nevertheless, identity is a realized fact as is seen in the direct and immediate experience of the great teachers. Since identity is a fact and the identity between *Iishvara* and *jiiva* seems an impossibility, the scriptural statement `*tat tvam asi*' cannot be interpreted in the explicit meaning, because such interpretation would falsify the scriptural statement. Therefore, it has to be interpreted in a meaning other than the primary meaning, though it must be related to the primary meaning of these terms. Shankara clearly speaks of this point in his *Brahma-Suutra Bhaashya* as follows: " If God becomes identical with the transmigrating soul, God will cease to exist; and as a result, the scripture will become useless. Similarly if the transmigrating soul becomes God, there will be none to follow the scriptures, which will certainly become useless. This will also contradict such means of proof as common experience."[102] Since this identity cannot be established in the level of the primary meaning of the words `That' and `Thou', Shankara attempts to explain these words in the their implied meaning, that is related to the direct meaning.

In order to clarify the implied meanings of the `*tat*' and `*tvam*,' Shankara uses negative method and direct positive method,[103] both proposed by the Upanishads.[104] The implied meaning of the word `*tat*' refers to the all-pervading being that is absolutely free from all the impurities of the transmigratory existence. This being is neither gross nor subtle, but is ever-free from the taint of darkness, having no greater bliss than itself, embodiment of existence-knowledge, and is by definition the universal self, i.e., *Brahman*. This universal being is the efficient and material cause of the universe. So, *Brahman* alone exists, and everything is known when it is known. Since everything originates in *Brahman* and finds its existence in it, nothing can limit it. Just as a jar that originates from the earth cannot limit the earth, in the same way the whole universe, including time and space which originates in *Brahman*, cannot limit it. Just as a jar is nothing but the earth, so also the universe is nothing but *Brahman*. On the contrary, *Brahman* is the source of everything, and everything is under its control.[105] Thus, "the unassociated consciousness, which is the substratum of the limiting adjuncts and of *Iishvara* which they limit, is the implied meaning of `That'."[106]

What is meant by the word `*tvam*' in the implied meaning is the inner self, the *Aatman*. It is different from the gross body, just as the seer of a jar, in all respects, is different from the jar. *Aatman* is also distinct from the subtle body consisting of the senses, the mind, the vital forces and the intellect. It is the self that illuminates and modifies the functions of the various physical and mental faculties. Self also is distinct from the three states, as it is that which witnesses these states. Thus, we comprehend the implied meaning of `*tvam*' only when we negate the body, the senses, the mind, the vital forces, the intellect and the ego; just as the reality of the rope is known only when the snake is negated from the rope-snake. When this negation is done, we come to know that the `Thou', i.e., *Aatman*, is free from phenomenal existence, birth, growth, passing from one state to another, decline and death, and the `Thou' is the changeless self, the dearest of all and one without a second.[107] Thus, for Shankara, "the unassociated transcendent consciousness -- the inward bliss -- which is the substratum of the limiting adjuncts and of the *jiiva* which they limit, is the implied meaning of `Thou'".[108]

Thus the implied meaning of `That' is the *nirgunaa Brahman*, the pure consciousness, who is absolute and without attributes. `Thou,' by implication, refers to the self, the *Aatman*, the pure consciousness, which is the reality underlying the mind-body system. Hence, the aphorism `*tat tvam asi*' means that *Brahman* and *Aatman* are absolutely one and the same.

Now that we have clarified the implied meanings of `That' and `Thou', we can analyze the *mahaavaakya*, `That art Thou'. The sentences in general can be classified into two groups. The first shows the connection between its terms, which denote distinct things. For example, the sentence, `Bring a cow,' connects two terms that are distinct from each other. The second group deals with identical propositions that establish genuine relationship between the terms. For example, in the statement `This is that Devadatta', a genuine relationship is established between the two terms. The Vedaantic aphorism `*tat tvam asi*' belongs to the second group of sentences.[109]

In the second group of sentences, there are basically three types of relations that can be spoken of as existing between two terms in a sentence. Firstly, relation between two words having the same substratum or locus is called *saamaanaadhikaranya*. Let us illustrate this relation with the help of the sentence, `This is that Devadatta'. In this sentence the word `that' signifies Davadatta associated with the past and the word `this' signifies Davadatta associated with the present. These two words, `that' and `this', have the same substratum or locus, viz., the persona of Devadatta. Secondly, there is the relation between the imports of two words qualifying each other, so as to signify a common object (*visheshana-visheshyabhaava*); in the sentence, `This is that Devadatta', the meaning of the word `that' is Devadatta existing in the past, and the meaning of the word `this' is Devadatta existing in the present. Though they are contrary ideas, they qualify each other so as to signify a common object, i.e., the person of Devedatta. The third, the *lakshya-lakshanabhaava*, consists in the relation between two words and an identical thing implied by them. In the illustration `This is that Devadatta,' the words `this' and `that' or their meaning, by elimination of contrary associations of past and present time, stand in the relation as the implier and the implied with Devadatta, who is common to both. Though the words `this' and `that' have their temporal differences, yet they both imply the same thing, viz., Devadatta. Such a relationship is also called *bhaagalakshana*.[110]

The meaning of the *mahaavaakya* `That art Thou' cannot be explained by way of *saamaanaadhikaranya* and *visheshana-visheshyabhaava* relations because they only establish the relation of connection and the relation of qualification between the two words in a sentence, respectively. Let us take for illustration the sentence, `It is a blue lotus'. Here the words `blue' and `lotus' are in the same case ending. The sentence, therefore, means that the lotus is blue and not any other color, such as yellow or red. It also means that the blueness does not belong to any piece of cloth or to anything else, but only to the lotus. Thus, this sentence does not mean all lotuses, nor all blue things, but only that particular lotus which is blue and that blue color which is associated with this particular lotus. In this manner, a relation of mutual connection (*sansarga*) is established between the two words `blue' and `lotus'; they both refer to the same substratum, namely, the blue lotus in question. Again, the same sentence, `It is a blue lotus,' can be viewed as a lotus having the qualification of blueness. Here the word `lotus' is qualified by the word `blue', and the word

`blue' is qualified by the word `lotus'. Thus, the sentence `It is a blue lotus,' establishes a relation of mutual qualification. Because *saamaanaadhikaranya* and *visheshana-visheshyabhaava* establish only a mutual connection between two terms and thereby refers to the same substratum and mutual qualification between two terms so that they can signify a common object, respectively, they cannot explain the Vedaantic aphorism `*tat tvam asi*', which implies the notion of identity.[111] Therefore, we need the third relationship, viz., *lakshya-lakshanabhaava* or *bhaagalakshana* which involves a reference to identity by understanding the implied meaning of words in a sentence, to explain the *mahaavaakya* `That art Thou'.

There are three kinds of meaning in the implied sense. The first is exclusive implication (*jahallakshanaa*) which consists in discarding the direct meaning of a sentence or a word completely in favor of its indirect meaning. For example, in the sentence `The Cowheard village is in the Gangaa,'[112] the phrase `in the Gangaa' is used to mean `on the bank of the river Gangaa'. This is the case of *jahallakshanaa* because the explicit meaning `in the Gangaa' is discarded in favor of the implied meaning `on the bank of the river Gangaa'. Thus, in this case the direct meaning is totally excluded in the implied meaning. The second meaning by implication is a non-exclusive implication (*ajahallakshanaa*). In it the direct meaning is not completely given up, but the sentence in question hints at the real meaning of the sentence. Here we obtain the meaning of the sentence not by excluding the direct meaning but by associating it with some object related to the idea expressed in the sentence. For instance, in the sentence, `The red color is running', the direct meaning of the sentence is not fully discarded but is hinted at. Its true meaning can be obtained by associating it with the red object that runs, for example, a red horse. The third meaning by implication is an exclusive-non-exclusive implication (*jahadaajahallakshanaa*). It consists in giving up one part of the direct meaning but retaining the other part. In the example, `This is that Devadatta', the association of place, time and conditions of the meeting of Devadatta now and then are given up, and the Devadatta, who is one and the same in both instances, is accepted.[113]

Now we can see which of these *lakshanaa* is applicable in the case of the interpretation of the Vedaantic aphorism `That art Thou'. *Jahallakshanaa* is not applicable in case of the interpretation of this aphorism because by using this *lakshanaa* we can derive the meaning by implication, since the implied meaning is not contained already in the original sentence. For instance, the sentence, `Cowheard village is in the Gangaa,' does not contain the phrase `on the bank of the river Gangaa,' and thus this meaning is not explicit. So by using *jahallakshanaa* one could derive the phrase `on the bank of the river Gangaa' by implication. But in the statement `That art Thou' the words `That' and `Thou' have their direct meanings and they are explicitly stated, i.e., they refer to *Iishavara* and to *jiiva*, respectively. Hence, it is not proper to discard the direct meaning of `That' and `Thou' and give them implied meaning by using *jahallakshanaa*. *Ajahallakshna*, as mentioned above, consists in not wholly discarding the real meaning of the sentence, but instead hinting at it. For example, in the sentence, `the red color is running,' the direct meaning is absurd. This absurdity can be removed not by abandoning the direct meaning of the sentence, but by associating it with an object of red color that runs, for instance, a red horse. The Vedaantic sentence `That art Thou' cannot be interpreted using this second *lakshanaa*. The terms

`That' and `Thou' clearly express their direct meaning and in fact nothing of the direct meaning is excluded from the `That' and the `Thou'. Hence, there is no reason to bring some element that is not excluded from the direct meaning of `That' and `Thou'. Therefore, *ajahallakshanaa* is not applicable in interpreting the sentence, `That art Thou'. *Jahadaajahalakshanaa* is precisely applicable in interpreting the identity statements like `That art Thou'. In this kind of implied meaning, a part of the sentence is given up, while the other part is retained. In the example, `This is that Devadatta,' the part that involves contradictions, namely, his life in the past and the present, is given up, but the person of Devadatta is retained. Likewise, in the *mahaavaakya*, `That art Thou,' the conflicting imports, namely, immediateness, remoteness and differences, are given up, and the absolute, pure consciousness which is common to both `That' and `Thou' is retained.[114] It is according to this *lakshanaa* that one must interpret the Vedaantic aphorism, `That art Thou,' that points to the identity between *Brahman* and *Aatman*.

The *mahaavaakya* `*tat tvam asi*' is not tautological or superfluous. It is the concrete representation of a movement of thought from the ontological level of particularity to another of universality and yet to another of unity. When the latter state of unity is attained, the distinctions between the former are negated. One begins with the individual consciousness, passes on to the universal consciousness and finally arrives at the pure consciousness that overcomes the separate reality of both the individual and the universal. It is this state of unity that constitutes the ground of all multiplicity and individuality.[115] We arrive at this unity by stripping away the incompatible and contradictory elements of the terms `That' and `Thou', and by looking for the common element or basis.[116] In the illustration, `This is that Devadatta', the Devadatta seen now is identified with the Devadatta seen years ago, despite all the accidental differences like physical conditions, mental states and places of meeting. What makes one identify the person of Devadatta as the same is the elimination of the differences. In the same way, the negation of the apparent contradictions of `That' and `Thou' would lead to the fundamental and absolute reality.

In fact, in recognizing the person of Devadatta now, one has learned nothing new about the person of Devadatta except the accidental qualities, but has only recognized Devadatta whom one had already known. In the same way the Upanishadic statements do not reveal anything new about *Brahman* or add anything new to its nature. Nevertheless, they are of immense value since they remove the false notion of difference between the individual self and the *Brahman*. When ignorance, on which is based the difference between `That' and `Thou,' is removed, they cease to be different, and we are able to experience their identity. In other words, the intrinsic nature of `That' and `Thou' is one and the same. The words `That' and `Thou' in their implicit sense (*lakshanaa*) point to the same reality, as the terms `I' and the `tenth' indicate one and the same person in the sentence `I am the tenth'.[117] Thus, the identity statement, `That art Thou,' clearly shows that *Brahmaanubhva* or self-realization is a non-dual and unique experience of identity of *Brahman* and *Aatman*, which is the absolute and fundamental reality behind both the universe and the individual.

1.2.2.3. This Self Is *Brahman*

The third *mahaavaakya* `*Ayam Aatma Brahmaa*' is found in the Maanduukhya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda. The three words in the aphorism mean the following: `*ayam*' means `this'; `*Aatma*' refers to the self within that is the underlying substratum that witnesses all the activities of *jiiva*; and `*Brahmaa*' refers to *Brahman* which is the underlying principle that is the foundation of the manifold phenomenal existence. Thus, this Vedaantic statement affirms that the activating principles behind the individual ego and the vitalizing principle of the entire universe are one and the same. This *mahaavaakya*, therefore, in a practical way restates the truth of unity between *Brahman* and *Aatman*. Since this aphorism provides a practical tool for the aspirant's reflection and practice and thereby helps to discover the oneness between *Brahman* and *Aatman* within oneself, it is called `the statement of practice' (*abhyaasa vaakhya*). [118]

1.2.2.4. I Am *Brahman*

The last of the four Vedaantic statements is `*Aham Brahmaa Asmi*' which appears in the Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad in the Yajur Veda. The words `*aham*' (`I') and `*asmi*' (am) and *Brahman* indicate that the aphorism is the conclusive pronouncement of a person of self-realization. The self-realized man declares in this aphorism the union of his consciousness with the absolute consciousness. The `I' (*aham*) referred to here is not that of the individual ego, prior to the self-realization, who is the waker, the dreamer and the deep-sleeper, and the subject of the bodily, mental and the intellectual functions. But, the *aham* here is the real `I', the self, i.e., the `Thou' (*tvam*) referred to in the *mahaavaakya* `That art Thou'. The aphorism `I am *Brahman*' expresses the deep and intuitive experience of the seeker in which he realizes his oneness with *Brahman*. Thus, the seeker proclaims that `I am *Brahman*'; `my pure self is *Brahman*'; `my pure, unconditioned and native `I' is *Brahman*'; and `I am the all-pervading reality'. Since this aphorism is the ultimate declaration of the aspirant who has realized his oneness with *Brahman*, it is called `the statement of experience' (*anubhava vaakya*).[119]

Our study of the four *mahaavaakyas* clearly shows that self-realization (*Brahmaanubhava*) consists of the intuitive experience of *Aatman* as *Brahman*. The apparent dualism present in these aphorisms gives way as the direct meanings of the words in these aphorisms, viz., `*prajnaanam*' (`consciousness') and `*Brahmaa*' (`*Brahman*'), `*tvam*' (`Thou') and `*tat*' (`That'), `*ayamaatma*' (`this self') and `*Brahmaa*' (`*Brahman*'), `*aham*' (`I') and `*Brahmaa*' (`*Brahman*') refer to *jiiva* and *Iishvara* respectively. Since such an identity of *jiiva* and *Iishvara* is not possible, the meaning of these words must be understood by way of exclusive-non-exclusive implication (*jahadaajahallakshanaa*). Therefore, the pairs of words in each of these *mahaavaakyas* refer by implication to *Aatman* in the level of the microcosm and to *Brahman* in the level of macrocosm. In fact these both are the same infinite all-pervading reality. Self-realization consists in the experience of the unity between *Brahman* and *Aatman* that is implied by the four *mahaavaakyas*. Now that we have analyzed the nature of self-realization by way of the four Vedaantic aphorisms, we could proceed in the next section to describe the state of self-realization (*Brahmaanubhava*).

1.2.3. The State of Self-realization

Maanduukya Upanishad describes the state of self-realization in the following words:[*Brahmaanubhava* is] not that which cognizes the internal (objects), not that which cognizes the external (objects), not what cognizes both of them, not a mass of cognition, not cognitive, not non-cognitive. [It is] unseen, incapable of being spoken of, ungraspable, without any distinctive marks, unthinkable, unnameable, the essence of knowledge of the one self, that into which the world is resolved, the peaceful, the benign, the non-dual.. . .[120]

This particular Upanishadic description of the state of self-realization is expressed in the negative form because in human language every direct affirmation is necessarily particular and determinate and so imposes a limitation on the object thus affirmed. Therefore, only when we negate a determination, do we truly affirm it. So the negative terms used in the descriptions of self-realization in the above-quoted Upanishadic statement are preeminently affirmative.[121] This is especially true when the description is about the state of self-realization, which is beyond the level of phenomenal experience. In our attempt to describe *Brahmaanubhava*, we basically follow a similar approach, clarifying it by moving from negation to affirmation.

1.2.3.1. Self-realization is an experience in which the non-dual *Brahman* is realized as the substratum (*adhisthanam*) of the phenomenal world (*jagat*). The term `*jagat*' refers to the three worlds of our experience, viz., the gross world of objects and beings, the subtle inner world of emotions and feelings, and the vacant world of deep sleep. Thus, *jagat* refers to the gross, the subtle and the causal bodies and their experiences in the state of waking, dream and deep-sleep. The experience of the *jagat* is the result of ignorance. *Brahman*, identical with *Aatman*, is the substratum of the world marked by ignorance. *Brahmaanubhava* is an experience in which one experiences the passing nature of the *jagat* and *Brahman* as the *adhisthanam* of its existence. Vedaantins compare self-realization and what happens in it to the illusion of silver in an oyster shell. In a moonlit night an oyster shell produces the illusion of silver. The illusion remains as long as the true substratum behind the illusion, viz., the oyster shell, is not recognized. The unseen oyster shell is the *adhisthanam* of the illusion of silver. In the same way in *Brahmaanubhva* one realizes that the unseen *Brahman* is the *adhisthanam* of the pluralistic world (*jagat*). Substratum is that from which everything originates, in which everything exists and to which everything returns. For example, the ocean is seen as the *adhisthanam* of the waves, as they come from it, exist in it and go back to it. In the same way, in the state of self-realization *Brahman* is experienced as the *adhisthanam* of the pluralistic world, in that it arises from, exists in and merges into the non-dual *Brahman*.[122]

1.2.3.2. In the state of self-realization, the seeker discards all type of distinctions, such as, form, color, caste, status and position, in the process experiencing the unity of *Brahman* with *Aatman*. In the worldly experience human beings are classified under various categories. Firstly, we have the four castes: the thinker-class (*brahmins*) the leader-class (*kshytriyas*), the trader-class (*vaisyas*) and the labor-class (*suudras*). Secondly, we have colored races: the white (European), the yellow (Mangolian), the brown (Indian) and the black (African). Thirdly, there are four stages of life (*aashramaas*): the celibate (*brahmachaari*), the householder (*grahasti*), the recluse (*vanaprasti*) and the sage (*sanyaasi*). We can add more divisions. All these categorizations are based on the quality,

texture and various combinations of gross, subtle and causal bodies, and are due to the difference in physical structure, emotional texture and intellectual caliber. In the state of *Brahmaanubhava* one experiences the true self within, i.e., *Brahman*, the infinite consciousness and bliss, who functions through all such categories, is one and the same, is unchanging, ever remaining unaffected by the distinctions such as caste, color, and status. Then one realizes that the world of names and forms, caste and color, race and creed is but the one unchanging supreme reality, the all-pervading real self. A simile is used to illustrate this point. Water is tasteless and colorless and it retains this quality even in a mixture. Yet color and taste is attributed to it because of its association with such substances. In the same way, though *Aatman* is ever unchanging and pure in all things, due to ignorance one associates it with gross, subtle and causal bodies. The state of self-realization frees the seeker from all these impurities and lets one experience the identity with pure self.[123]

1.2.3.3. *Brahmaanubhava* is an experience bereft of attachment (*raga*), desire (*iccha*), joy (*sukha*) and sorrow (*dukha*). All these four experiences mentioned above are related to each other. When a person lacks something in his life, he feels incomplete and unfulfilled. This feeling of lack makes the intellect of this person work out some plan in relation to which his incompleteness can be remedied. When the scheme is set, there emerges in the person an attachment to his plan. As this attachment gets intensified, it becomes a desire. If the desire is fulfilled the person feels joy and, if not accomplished, it causes him sorrow. All these four experiences are related to the person's intellect. In fact, it is the intellect which is attached, desires and feels pain or joy. In other words, it is the intellect that experiences all these conditions. Self-realization is a state that is beyond these states conditioned by ignorance, as *Aatman* identical with *Brahman* is neither a doer nor an enjoyer. Therefore, in *Brahmaaunbhava* one moves beyond these limiting intellectual conditions and experiences the eternal, pure and self-illumined *Brahman* as his true self.[124]

1.2.3.4. In self-realization all distinctions in the level of knowledge cease to exist because the `knower,' who is `knowing' the world of objects, realizes his true self as *Brahman*. All such distinctions, such as, `the knower', `the knowing' and `the known' exist only in the phenomenal experience because here knowledge is attained through the media of body, mind and intellect. *Brahmaanubhava* experience goes beyond these faculties of knowledge in which the seeker becomes the absolute knowledge (*Brahman*); in the process all distinctions in the level of knowledge vanish. There is no need for any of the faculties to experience *Brahman*, as it is self-illuminating. All that is required is the elimination of those faculties of knowledge, so that the pure consciousness can shine forth. Just as a lamp, which illuminates other objects, does not need any other lamp to manifest itself, in the same way, the self-effulgent consciousness manifests itself. Thus, self-realization is an experience of oneness in the inner depths of the seeker.[125]

1.2.3.5. Self-realization cannot be achieved by the finite efforts of a human individual. It can never come to be as the direct result of one's efforts or due to the effectiveness of one's spiritual practices. The purpose of one's study and spiritual practices is to get rid of the negative tendencies, such as lust (*kaama*), anger (*krodha*), greed *(lobha*), delusion (*moha*), intoxication (*mala*) and envy (*matsanya*), and thereby to bring in an inner tranquillity wherein the self can reveal itself. The realization of the self is like the sun rising in the

morning. As the sun rises, it dispels the darkness, and the entire darkness is removed when the sun manifests itself fully. Similarly one attains self-realization when *Aatman* reveals itself.[126]

Again in *Brahmaanubhava* nothing new is attained, as *Aatman* is an ever-present reality. It is the very nature of the seeker and the inner core of his personality. In fact, *Aatman* was never lost from the person, so one need not to get back to it by one's efforts. When the person works toward removing the limiting adjuncts (*vaasanas*), *Aatman* is realized. It is like a dreamer waking up to the state of consciousness. A dreamer has not gained anything which he did not possess by waking up to the state of consciousness, but rather has regained the identity with the conscious state, which he lost while dreaming. In the same way the seeker, who lost sight of his identity with *Brahman* due to ignorance, now experiences his true nature. Another example would illustrate this aspect of self-realization. A woman wearing an ornament around her neck thinks that she lost it and makes a long search. At the end of the search she recognizes that she herself is wearing it. She may think that she got the ornament back. But, in fact, the ornament was not obtained from anywhere else, but rather she was always in possession of it. Similarly *Aatman* is an ever-present reality in the core of the seeker's being. When ignorance is destroyed, he discovers his inner core as *Aatman*.[127]

1.2.3.6. In the state of self-realization one loses sight of the awareness of the `I' (*aham*) and the `mine' (*mama*), and experiences the entire universe in one's own self and one's self everywhere. Caught up in the delusion of ignorance, one identifies oneself with his physical and mental faculties and considers oneself as the thinker, feeler and perceiver, i.e., as a subject or an `I'. In this manner comes about the individuality of the person, which, with the help of its contact with sense objects, emotions and thoughts, develops a sense of possessiveness that is expressed in words, such as, `my' and `mine'. In the state of self-realization, due to the emergence of true knowledge of *Aatman*, the individuality is dissolved along with the notions of `I', `my' and `mine'.[128]

The scriptures make use of three analogies to describe this loss of individuality, by the total merger of the transcendental consciousness at the time of self-realization with gross, subtle and causal bodies and the physical and mental faculties associated with them. The first metaphor compares the merger of individuality with the *Aatman* to the mixture of water with water. Two containers of water have their own separate existence. But when they are mixed together they lose their individualities and become the same mass of water. This mixture refers to the merger of the physical body with the self at the time of self-realization. Before self-realization the physical body is known to be fully different from the *Aatman*. After self-realization, the self, the all-pervading reality, takes hold of the body, so much so that it loses its independent existence. In other words, the bodily dimension no longer matters in the state of self-realization. Second comparison, viz., the merger of light with light refers to the loss of mental and intellectual faculties and their functions in the ultimate self in *Brahmaanubhava*. When two distinct lights from two different sources merge, they become one mass of light. Before self-realization, the mind and the intellect were like lights coming from two sources distinct from the self. But during self-realization, they both become one with the self, and the functions of the mind and the intellect are

overshadowed so much so that there is no mind and intellect, but only the transcendent self. The third analogy of space uniting with space refers to the ultimate realization of the self by union with *Aatman* with all-pervading *Brahman*. Space can never be conditioned because of its subtle nature. Even when we see space as limited by a pot (pot-space) or a room (room-space), in fact, space is one and the same in spite of the apparent conditions, such as, pot and room limiting it. This is also true of the *Aatman*, the inner self. Though physical, mental and intellectual conditions apparently limit the self, it is limitless reality, which is forever one with *Brahman*, whether before, during or after its realization.[129] These analogies clearly show that in the state of self-realization the individuality of a person is destroyed, the self is recognized as the ultimate core of oneself, and identity with the absolute *Brahman* is experienced.

This loss of individuality and unity with *Brahman*, experienced by the person in the state of self-realization, brings about a significant change in the perspective of the realized person. He begins to perceive the whole universe as a projection or expression of his self, which is the same as absolute *Brahman*, one without a second. This is because the true knowledge of the self not only destroys his ignorance, but also the totality of reality. The example of a traveler who lost direction on his journey can illustrate this point. A traveler loses his direction and the direction is pointed out to the east. Instantly he not only understands the east, but also the west, the north and the south, besides the other sub-directions. This example shows that the knowledge of one reality can remove the ignorance regarding other entities as well. Since in self-realization one attain the knowledge of the absolute *Brahman*, which is omniscient, it, in turn, removes the totality of ignorance. As a result, in *Brahmaanubhava* one experiences the *Aatman* in all and all in *Aatman*, just as the different types of pots, jars and vases are nothing else but the clay in essence. Thus, in the state of self-realization, one not only loses one's individuality, but also experiences the multiplicity of the world in the unity of the self.[130]

1.2.3.7. Self-realization is a state "beyond the attainment of which there is no greater attainment, beyond whose bliss there is no greater bliss and beyond whose knowledge there is no greater knowledge."[131] This particular quotation declares that self-realization is a state of absolute perfection, which is the final goal of human existence. It is a negative statement about the state of self-realization, as it eludes a direct and positive description. The method used in this description of *Brahmaanubhava* is called *tatastha lakshanaa*. It is a technique by which an unknown permanent object is pointed out by means of an impermanent object. For example, an unknown house in a row of houses is pointed out by calling one's attention to a bird that sits on its roof. Here the bird is an impermanent reality, but it helps one to identify the unknown, permanent house. The quoted statement describes the unknown state of self-realization in terms of the known experiences of the physical body, mind and intellect. It describes *Brahmaanubhava* as a state of the greatest attainment, the greatest bliss and the greatest knowledge. The physical body attempts to attain all kinds of achievements by seeking objects of its pleasure. This process goes on until it reaches the transcendental experience, where there can be no greater attainment possible. In the same way the mind seeks the joys of this world until the state of self-realization, where one experiences an absolute state of bliss. The intellect probes the world and acquires a variety of knowledge until it reaches a state in which no greater knowledge

is possible. Thus, self-realization is described, in the above statement, as a state beyond the final limit that one can arrive at by one's physical, mental and intellectual functions. It is a state of absolute fulfillment, beyond which there can be no greater experience.[132] That is why self-realization is again described as ". . . [The state] having seen which there is nothing else to be seen; having become which there is no rebirth; and having known which there is nothing else to be known."[133]

1.2.3.8. *Brahmaanubhava*, the non-dual state of unbroken bliss, is attained only when the seeker negates the ephemeral pleasures of the world. Only by way of identification with objects of sense, is a person attached to the world. This attraction to the world becomes so real that one feels secure only in peripheral and terrestrial states created by the mental and physical faculties. When such a state of mind holds a person, he would never be able to know his true nature, and so self-realization can never take place. In order to experience the true realization of *Brahman* as *Aatman* one must negate the world, transcend one's perceptions, emotions and thoughts, and surrender one's body, mind and intellect to the experience of the self. Once self-realization emerges, the totality of experiences conditioned by the physical and mental faculties merges into the unbroken bliss of the eternal *Brahman*. This experience can be compared to the dream world and its experiences merging into the mind of the waker when the dreamer awakens to the waking state. When the dreamer wakes up from the dream, he realizes that the totality of his dream is nothing else but an aspect of his mind. It is this negation of the contents of the dream as non-real that makes the dreamer experience the reality of the waking state. In the same way, unless one negates this terrestrial existence, *Brahmaanubhava* will not dawn on one.[134]

1.2.3.9. Self-realization is a non-dual experience in which the seeker experiences *Brahman* as pervading the whole universe. Permeating the universe, *Brahman* manifests itself on four levels. On the level of gross and inert objects, *Brahman* manifests itself as existence (*sat*). In the waking and dream states of living beings, *Brahman* gives itself as intelligence (*chit*). In the deep-sleep condition of animate beings, *Brahman* gives itself as the bliss (*aananda*). The fourth level is the state of self-realization where *Brahman* is experienced in its purest and unmanifest existence. The analogy of the iron ball in the fire illustrates this truth. When the iron ball is placed in the fire, it acquires the qualities of the fire, such as, heat, light and ability to burn. The fire permeates the whole ball and exists above and over it. Similarly *Brahman* permeates the whole universe in the level of existence, intelligence and bliss, besides existing beyond these levels as the unmanifest *Brahman*.[135]

Thus, in *Brahmaanubhava* one realizes that there exists nothing other than *Brahman*; whatever is seen and heard cannot be anything other than *Brahman*, and at the same time *Brahman* is other than the universe, ever present and permanent. This point is better explained with the help of the example of a mirage in a desert. The traveler who journeys through the desert sees water where nothing other than the hot sand of the desert exists. So his experience of water in the desert is an illusion, and in a similar manner a person who is caught up in the state of ignorance perceives the universe. The non-dual and eternal *Brahman* is seen as the limited and perishable world. Thus, his perception of *Brahman* as identical with the world is as much an illusion as a traveler seeing water in a desert. This analogy of the mirage in the desert sand clearly shows that the mirage has no independent

existence apart from the desert. The desert is the substratum of the illusion of mirage. That which is real is the desert. In the same way the universe is an unreality based on the substratum of *Brahman*, which only is really real. This illustration also points to the fact that *Brahman* is other than the universe and is ever permanent, just as is the desert in relation to the mirage. It is this truth that makes the scriptures declare *Brahman* as *Satyam* (reality) and the universe as *mithya* (illusion). *Satyam* is that which is permanent, enveloping the whole range of time, viz., the past, the present and the future. But *mithya* is a temporary reality seen in the present, which does not have roots in the past and which may pass away in the future.[136] Thus, the state of self-realization is an unique experience, in which the seeker experiences everything that exists in *Brahman* and at the same time sees *Brahman* as something other than the universe that gives permanence and unity to every level of existence.

Even though all these descriptions we have attempted to provide may not fully clarify the state of self-realization, they do give us diverse insights about this unique state, which cannot be understood in terms of the categories of the phenomenal existence.

1.3. CHARACTERISTIC OF SELF-REALIZATION

Now that we have analyzed, so far in this chapter, the nature of *Brahman*, *Aatman* and *Brahmaanubhava*, we could proceed to look into some of the characteristics of this state in this section. The study of the characteristics of self-realization would elucidate the concept of this state further. We can speak of four basic characteristics of self-realization, as follows: experience of oneness, immediate and direct experience, indescribable experience and uncaused experience. We will elaborate on each of these characteristics.

1.3.1. Self-realization: An Experience of Oneness

Self-realization does not have an object of experience, nor does it have a subject of experience in the empirical sense, as *Brahman* is neither a subject nor an object. Shankara speaks of *Brahmaanubhava* as "pure knowledge and pure bliss, not smitten with suffering like sense perception, but serene (*prasana*), ever content and homogeneous or undifferentiated (*ekarasa*).[137] Since self-realization is pure existence (*avagatimarta*) and pure knowledge (*keevala jnaana*), there is no possibility for the *Aatman* or *Brahman* to become its subject or object.

Brahman cannot be the knower of self-realization, because if *Brahman* is constantly aware of its bliss, that is its nature. Hence there is no sense in maintaining that *Brahman* cognizes its own bliss. If, on the other hand, we suppose that *Brahman* knows its bliss in an interrupted manner, then in the intervals when it does not cognize itself, it must do something else. The result of such a view would lead to the consideration of *Brahman* as changing and non-permanent.[138] So either way, *Brahman* cannot be the subject of *Brahmaanubhava*. It, therefore, is "neither *Brahman*-consciousness nor self-consciousness; it is pure consciousness without subject-object duality."[139] Shankara uses the example of fire and light to illustrate the impossibility of *Brahman* being the subject of self-realization. Fire cannot burn itself, but burning is the very nature and essence of fire. Neither does light

enlighten itself, but, enlightening other objects, is the very nature of light. In the same way *Brahman* is essentially knowledge and being. So, we cannot say that *Brahman* knows itself, for its very nature is knowledge. "As the fire does not burn itself", says Shankara, "so the self does not know itself."[140]

Shankara likewise holds that *Brahmaanubhava* is an objectless experience. When speaking of it, one thinks that it is an experience of *Brahman* by the self. This way of looking at self-realization stems from ignorance. In fact *Brahman* is none other than one's own self, and *Brahmaanubhava* does not mean experiencing *Brahman* as an object, but the realization of the real nature of one's own self.[141] Unlike empirical experience, *Brahmaanubhava* is not an experience of *Brahman* as an object, for it is not different from *Brahman*. When one attains self-realization one does not experience *Brahman* objectively (*vastu*) but recognizes his true nature, which is *Brahman*. "In *Brahmaanubhava*", says Shankara, "the differences between the experiencer (*labdha*), the experienced (*labdhya*) and the experience (*upalabdhi*) are totally absent."[142] Thus, self-realization is a non-dual and unique experience, which in no way involves the distinction between the subject and the object.

Though Shankara strongly defends the non-dualistic nature of *Brahmaanubhava*, many scriptural texts seem to contradict his position. Some passages in the scripture refer to *Brahman* as `all-knowing' and `eternal'.[143] Besides, Shankara himself speaks of *Brahman* as a witness (*saakshi*) of all actions that take place in the world of phenomena.[144] Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad gives an analogy of the union of two lovers as an illustration to clarify the notion of *Brahmaanubhava*. A man fully embraced by his beloved wife does not know anything, either internal or external, and is fully absorbed in the one whom he loves; so the infinite being, fully embraced by the supreme self, does not know anything at all, either internal or external.[145] Again, in the same Upanishad, there is another illustration pointing to duality in *Brahmaanubhava*. When a lump of salt, which is a product of sea water, falls into the sea it becomes fully dissolved in the water and becomes one with it, to such a degree that it can never again be separated from the sea water. In the same way, in self-realization the individual self enters into the supreme self, loses its separate identity and becomes one with the supreme self.[146] Mundaka Upanishad states: "As the flowing rivers disappear in the ocean quitting names and forms: so the knower, being liberated from name and form, goes into heavenly person (*Brahman*), the higher than the high."[147]

All these illustrations, whose intent and purpose is to describe the nature of self-realization, seem to point to a duality between *Brahman* and the self in *Brahmaanubhava*. They portray self-realization as that experience by which the self attains *Brahman*. The ideas of *Brahman* as the witness and as the eternal knower suggest that *Brahman* is a subject distinct from the self as the object. The ideas -- that the self is embraced into *Brahman* like a lover is embraced by the beloved, that the self is dissolved into *Brahman* as the salt is dissolved into the sea water and that the self enters *Brahman* as rivers merge into the ocean -- indicate that in *Brahmaanubhava* there is a union of two distinct realities. They also point to the fact that the self's oneness with *Brahman* is as the result of its union with *Brahman*. This means that *Brahman* is the goal of the self and the object of higher realization.[148] As a result, self-realization amounts to an experience of *Brahman* by the self, i.e., the self is the subject whose object of experience is *Brahman*.

This description of *Brahmaanubhava* is incompatible with Shankara's Advaitic understanding of self-realization. He considers it as an experience which involves no duality. If *Brahmaanubhava* is the experience of the self whose object is *Brahman,* then this experience cannot be absolute, but rather only transitory and limited, because the individual self or the experiencer is limited. According to Shankara, the dualistic consideration of self-realization is a result of ignorance, which consists in mistakenly accepting the phenomenal (*vyavahaara*) as the transcendental (*paramaartha*). As long as one is under the sway of ignorance, one is not going to see the true nature of self-realization. In reality *Brahman* is neither a knower nor a witness. The word `knower' is used of *Brahman* figuratively, to indicate pure knowledge, which is the nature of *Brahman*.[149] For Shankara says "the immutable consciousness that is *Brahman* is spoken of as the `eternal knower' by a figure of speech (*upachara*), just as, by virtue of its heat, fire is regarded as the agent of heating."[150] All concepts of duality enter only if these texts are interpreted from the phenomenal point of view. But Shankara holds that if the Upanishadic texts are given the right interpretation, they in no way conflict with the tenets of Advaita Vedaanta.

Commenting on the illustration in which the self is spoken of as being embraced by the supreme self, Shankara argues that the supreme self is not different from the individual self. In fact, they are one and the same self, pure consciousness. Due to ignorance we see the supreme self as the individual self. The individual self is embraced by its own real nature, which is the supreme and infinite. Therefore, what is embraced and what embraces are one and the same. They are not two different realities, but are identical. However, the empirical self, before it has realized its real nature, thinks of the supreme self as something different from it. The idea of embracing is meaningful only from the point of view of an empirical self. But what actually happens in *Brahmaanubhava* is that the self realizes its real nature by giving up ignorance.[151] The words used in the illustrations like `entering' (*preveesa*), `merging' (*aapti*) and `attaining' (*labdha*) are figuratively used, similar to the words `witness' or `the eternal knower'. They have meaning and significance only from the relative point of view. Shankara clearly points to this truth in his commentary on Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad in which he says:

> He holds the definite conclusions of all the Upanishads, that we are nothing but the self or *Brahman*, that is always the same, homogeneous, one with a second, unchanging, birthless, undecaying, immortal, deathless, and free from fear. Therefore, the statement `he is merged in *Brahman*' is but a figurative (*upachaara*), meaning the cessation of differences created by ignorance as a result of knowledge.[152]

Therefore, for Shankara, these problems -- whether self-realization has an object or not; if it has an object how can it be non-dual; and if it does not have an object how can it be considered an experience of *Brahman* -- arise only when *Brahmaanubhava* is understood and explained from the stand point of empirical experience. From the point of view of absolute knowledge there are no such problems. True knowledge is non-dual. *Brahmaanubhava* is nothing but *Brahman* itself. One can attain self-realization only by directly and immediately being *Brahman*. In *Brahmaanubhava* there is no distinction

between *Brahman* and the experience of *Brahman*. Direct and immediate experience of *Brahman* is *Brahmaanubhava*.[153] Thus, it is a non-dual, subject-objectless experience.

1.3.2. Self-realization: Immediate and Direct Experience

Since self-realization is non-dual, subjectless and objectless experience, it must be immediate and direct experience.[154] So, unlike the empirical experience, it cannot be obtained through senses, mind and intellect. It is immediate and direct because it consists in recognizing and realizing one's own true nature. There is no need of any mediation for the self to know it's own self. For Shankara says: "The consciousness of objects (which arise out of the functioning of the eye and other faculties) is mediately known: for it depends on an intervening reflection of the self (in order to be known). As it is the self of the phenomenal consciousness, *Brahman* is immediately known."[155]

In order to demonstrate the immediate and direct nature of *Brahmaanubhava*, Shankara alludes to the Upanishadic illustration of a group of people crossing the river. When they had crossed the river, in order to ascertain whether all in the company had arrived at the other side of the river, one person began to count the members of the group. He counted everyone except himself. Each time he counted and found one person missing from the group, until he came to realize that he himself was the missing person, for whom he had been looking. In such realization, neither was there any effort involved, nor was there any intervention or mediation of any other factor, for the missing person and the one who was looking for the missing person are one and the same, and are identical with each other. Hence there is no need for any mediation to recognize one's own self.[156] All that is needed in the direct realization is recognizing one's own self as the true self (*Brahman*). Therefore, self-realization is the direct experience of the reality of oneself. It is direct and immediate experience and is never obtained through any media like the senses, the mind or the intellect.

1.3.3. Self-realization: An Indescribable Experience

Since *Brahmaanubhava* is without subject-object duality and is immediate and direct experience, it is indescribable. The very notion of description involves duality. In the empirical realm any experience, however small or great, can be given at least some description. What can be known through various means of empirical knowledge (*pramaanas*) can also be expressed in words, using our own everyday or philosophical language. What is not known or experienced through empirical means of knowledge cannot be expressed in words. As *Brahmaanubhava* is trans-empirical, non-dual and undifferentiated, it is indescribable. As *Brahman* is beyond all phenomena, the experience of *Brahman* also is beyond the realm of phenomenal language. Shankara says: "It is only to the object of knowledge and not to the non-objects that a word or the idea can be applied. *Brahman*, which is the self of them and also of the ego is not within the scope of the word or an idea."[157] Maanduukya Upanishad speaks of the indescribable nature of *Brahman* in the following passage:

> Not inwardly cognitive, not outwardly cognitive, not bothwise cognitive, not a cognitive-mass, not cognitive, not non-cognitive, unseen, without which there can be dealing, ungraspable, having no distinctive mask, unthinkable, that cannot be designated, the essence of the assurance of which is the state of being one with the self, the cessation of development, tranquil, benign, without a second . . .is the self (*Brahman*).[158]

Since *Brahman* is indescribable and unknowable, *Brahmaanubhava* is also indescribable. A thing can be defined when it can be distinguished from other things, because of its distinguishing characterization. But there is nothing different from *Brahman*, from which it can be distinguished. Nor can anything be said about *Brahman*, so that it can be distinguished on that basis. Therefore, one can speak of self-realization only by way of negation, by denying qualities of the empirical experience superimposed on *Brahmaanubhava* by ignorance. In the empirical realm, any experience small or great can be given at least some kind of description. *Brahmaanubhava* is trans-empirical and cannot be described because of the very fact that it is non-dual and undifferentiated. The words and languages we use refer to the phenomenal world and to the relative realities. As *Brahman* is beyond all that is phenomenal, self-realization cannot be described in ordinary language. For Shankara says: "It is only to the object of knowledge and not to the non-objects that a word or an idea can be applied. *Brahman*, which is the self of them all and also of the ego is not within the scope of a word or an idea."[159]

Yet the Upanishads do attempt to define *Brahman* as `reality' (*satyam*), `knowledge' (*jnaanam*) and `infinitude' (*aanandam*).[160] In fact, this description is not true of *Brahman*, for it does not elevate our conception of *Brahman* to a higher level, or remove our conception of finitude. It only negates the qualities of `unreality', `ignorance' and `finitude' superimposed upon *Brahman*. The description of *Brahman* as `reality-knowledge-infinitude' is a logical impropriety. By this very impropriety this description of *Brahman* serves to show the logical uniqueness of *Brahman* and that of *Brahmaanubhava*. By its striking oddness the phrase preserves as well as reveals, to some extent, the great mystery of *Brahman*. It preserves the mystery of *Brahman* because we have no idea what infinite knowledge is, though we know what knowledge is. It reveals the mystery of *Brahman* because it effectively shows the uniqueness of *Brahman* by differentiating it from all objects and empirical subjects.[161]

1.3.4. Self-realization: An Eternal and Uncaused Experience

Self-realization is of the nature of *Brahman*. Since *Brahman* is eternal, *Brahmaanubhava* is an eternal experience. Therefore, one cannot speak of it as taking place in some particular moment in time. Unlike empirical experiences, self-realization is an experience, which is without a beginning or an end. In empirical experience there is the distinction between `the knower', `the known' and `the knowledge'. In self-realization there are no such distinctions, for Shankara says, "knowledge is eternal knowledge. The known and the knowledge are not different"[162] in *Brahmaanubhava*.

Thus, *Brahmaanubhava* is the knowledge of an ontological state of absolute oneness and unity between *Brahman* (the unchanging, eternal reality in the universe) and *Aatman* (the unchanging, eternal reality in the individual).[163] Therefore, *Brahmaanubhava* is as eternal as *Brahman* and *Aatman*. It is not something that is caused by the individual who is striving to reach this state of unity. It is not an experience that takes place in time and which has *Brahman* for its object. For Shankara, the attainment of the self or *Brahman* cannot be obtaining of something, which has not been obtained before, for in *Brahmaanubhava* there is no difference between the person attaining and the object attained.[164] If *Brahman* is said to attain something other than itself, it becomes the attainer and the non-self, i.e., the object of attainment, because *Brahman*, the pure consciousness and eternal knowledge, is the one absolute reality.[165]

As eternal *Brahmaanubhava* is uncaused. There is nothing that can cause self-realization directly; it is an experience, which cannot be effected (*asaadhya*). Any attempt to cause self-realization is meaningless since the finite and limited cannot cause the trans-empirical and transcendental experience. As *Brahmaanubhava* is pure consciousness, it is essential for the attainment of anything, and therefore the very attempt to attain it indicates its attainment. In other words, all means of attainment are based on pure consciousness and so nothing can be attained without presupposing it. Therefore the self or *Brahman* is the basis of knowledge and in attaining *Brahmaanubhava* everything else is attained.[166] For Shankara says that just as one may get to the missing animal, by searching for it through its footprints, similarly when the self is attained everything is attained. The very knowledge of the self is its attainment.[167] *Brahmaanubhava* is so transcendental that there is no direct means of attaining it. According to Shankara looking for means to attain *Brahmaanubhava* would be like swimming on land under the impression that it is water, or searching for footprints of birds in space.[168] Thus, self-realization is eternal, uncaused, and identical with absolute reality. It consisting in recognizing that one is *Brahman*.

NOTES

1. Cf. Radhakrishnan, S., *The Principal Upanishads*, 3rd impression, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969), pp. 52-53.

2. Cf. Swami Gambhrananda, trans., *Brahma-Suutra Bhaashya*, 3rd ed., (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), I, i, 1, pp. 11-12 (Hereafter: *BSB*). Cf. Also Radhakrishnan, S., *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 52.

3. Ramkant A. Sinari, *The Structure of Indian Thought*, (Illinois: Charles E. Thomas Publisher, 1970), p. 67.

4. Swami Virswarananda, trans., *Brahma-Suutra*, (Mayavata: Advaita Ashrama, 1948), I, i, 2, p. 26 (Hereafter: *BSB*, Virswarananda).

5. Cf. *BSB*, Thaibaut, pp. xxiv-xxv.

6. Cf. *BSB*, III, ii, 37.

7. Cf. *ibid.*, III, ii, 26.

8. Cf. *ibid.*, I, iii, 10; III, iii, 33.

9. Cf. *ibid.*, II, i, 26.

10. Cf. *ibid.*, III, ii, 13.

11. Cf. *ibid.*, III, ii, 11.

12. Cf. *ibid.*, I, iii, 8.

13. Cf. *ibid.*, III, ii, 12.

14. Cf. *Ch.U.*, VIII, vii, 1.

15. Cf. *BU*, III, iv, 1.

16. Cf. *ibid.*, III, v, 1.

17. Cf. *ibid.*, III, viii, 8.

18. Cf. *ibid.*, III, ix, 26.

19. Cf. *TU*, II, vii.

20. Cf. *BU*, IV, iv, 22.

21. Cf. *MU*, II, i, 2.

22. Cf. *ibid.*

23. Cf. *BU*, II, iv, 12.

24. Cf. *Ke.U.*, I, iii.

25. Cf. Radhakrishnan, S., trans., *Bagavad Giita*, (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1949), II, 20 (Hereafter: *BG*).

26. Cf. *ibid.*, V, 15.

27. Cf. *ibid.*, IX, 6.

28. Cf. *ibid.*, XIII, 12.

29. Cf. *ibid.*, XIII, 31.

30. Cf. *ibid.*, XIII, 27.

31. Cf. *ibid.*, XV, 17.

32. Cf. Shankara, *Aatmabhoodha [Knowledge of the Self]*, trans. A. Parthasarathy, 3rd ed., (Bombay: Vedaanta Life Institute, 1960), no. 36, pp. 74-76 [Hereafter: *AB*, Parthasarathy]. Cf. Also A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, 3rd ed., (Bombay: Vedaanta Life Institute, 1989), pp. 304-307.

33. Radhakrishnan, S., *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 272.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 617.

35. Cf. Paul Daussen, *The System of Vedaanta*, trans. Charles Johnson, (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1912), pp. 211-212. Cf. Also *BSB*, II, i, 20.

36. Radhakrishnan, S. and Moore C.A., eds., *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, 5th printing, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 507.

37. In interpreting the Upanishadic texts, Shankara is of the opinion that one must accept only those texts which speak of *Brahman* without qualities and forms. "But other texts speaking of *Brahman* with form", he says, "have the injunctions about meditations as their main objectives. So long as they do not lead to some contradictions, their apparent meaning should be accepted. But, when they involve contradictions, the principle to be followed for deciding one or the other is that those that have the formless *Brahman* as their main purport are more authoritative than the other which have not that as their main purpose. It is according to this that one is driven to the conclusion that *Brahman* is formless and not its opposite." Cf. *BSB*, III, ii, 14, p. 612.

38. *BU*, IV, v, 13.

39. Cf. *BSB*, III, ii, 16, pp. 613-614.

40. Cf. *ibid.*, III, ii, 18-20, pp. 615-617.

41. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 303-304. Cf. Also Shankara, *Aprokshaanubhuuti(Self-realization) of Sri Shankaraachaariya*, trans. Swami Vimuktananda, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), no. 64, p. 36 [Hereafter: *AI*].

42. Cf. *VC*, pp. 67-69, 101-102.

43. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, p. 304.

44. Baskali asked Bhava three times about the nature of *Brahman*. The latter remained silent all three times, but, finally he replied: "I have already spoken, but you cannot comprehend that self is silence". *BSB*, III, ii, 17, p. 614.

45. Cf. Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedaanta -- A Philosophical Reconstruction*, 2nd ed., (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1962), p. 9.

46. Cf. Rathakrishnan S., *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 73.

47. Cf. *BSB*, I, i, 1, p. 12. Cf. Also Shankara, *Aatmajnaanoopadesha Vidhi*, trans. Swami Jagadananda, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1979), no. IV, 10-11 (Hereafter: *AV*).

48. Cf. *BSB*, II, iii, 7, p. 455.

49. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 456.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 457.

51. Organ Troy Wilson, The *Self in Indian Philosophy*, (London: Mouton & Co., 1964), p. 104.

52. *AV*, no. II, 1.

53. Cf. Shankara, *Self-knowledge (Aatmabhooda)*, trans. Swami Niilananda, (New York: Ramakrishana Vivekananta Center, 1980), p. 118 (Hereafter: *AB*, Swami Nihilananda). 54. Cf. *AB*, A. Parthasarathi, no. 16, pp. 34-37.

55. Cf. *ibid.*, no.18, pp. 39-40. Cf. Also *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 133. Cf. Also *AV*, nos. III, 1-9; IV, 1-12.

56. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 133.

57. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 136. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*,(New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1987), pp. 156-157.

58. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, pp. 136-137.

59. Cf. *AB*, A. Parathasarathy, no. 19, pp. 41-42.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

61. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, pp. 137-138.

62. Cf. *AI*, no. 60, p. 43.

63. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 61, pp. 34-35.

64. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 62, p. 35.

65. *BU*, III, viii, 1.

66. *AB*, Parthasarthy, no. 24, p. 49.

67. *Ibid.*, no. 34, p. 68.

68. *Ibid.*, no. 35, p. 71

69. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 24, pp. 49-50.

70. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 34, pp. 68-70.

71. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 35, pp. 71-73.

72. *Ch.U.*, V, ix, 1.

73. Paul Deusen, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966), pp.86-87.

74. *BSB*, I, i, 1, pp. 11-12. Cf. Also *BU*, II, v, 19.

75. *VC*, p. 66.

76. Radhakrishnan S., *The Principal Upanishads*, pp. 73-74.

77. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 77.

78. *CU*, III, xiv, 1.

79. *BU*, I, iv, 10.

80. *Ibid.*, III, iv,1.

81. *Ibid.*, III, vii, 3.

82. *CU*, VI, viii, 7.

83. S. Radhakrishnan, basing himself on the authority of A.B. Keith, claims that no one can deny that the *Brahman-Aatman* doctrine has a long history, originating from the Rig Veda, developing in the Brahmanas and culminating in the Upanishads. Cf. Radhakrishnan S., *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 77, fn. 3.

84. Cf. Radhakrishnan S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 513.

85. Cf. Shankara, *Brihdaaranyaka Upanishad Bhaashya*, trans. Swami Madhvananda, 5th ed., (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1975), VI, v, 6 (Hereafter: *BUB*).

86. Shankara, *Gaudapaadakaarika Bhaashya* and *Maanduukya Upanishad Bhaashya*, trans. Swami Nihilananda, (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1955), IV, 85 (Hereafter: GKB).

87. *VC*, p. 65.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

89. Shankara, *Upadeshasaahasrii*, trans. Swami Jagadananda, 6th ed., (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1979), II, xvi, 70, p. 189 (Hereafter: *UI*).

90. *BSB*, IV, i , 2, p. 815.

91. Cf. *ibid.*, I, i, 4, p. 23.

92. Cf. Ramamurthi A., *Advaitc Mysticism of Shankara*, (West Bengal: The Center for Advanced Study in Philosophy, Vishva Bharati, Shanti Niketan, 1974), p. 116.

93. *AU*, III, i, 3.

94. *CU*, IV, x, 4.

95. *Ma.U.*, I, 2.

96. *BU*, I, iv, 10.

97. Cf. Parthasrathy A., *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 329-330. Cf. Also *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 30, pp. 60-61.

98. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, p. 330. Cf. Also *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 30, p. 61.

99. Cf. Sadananda Yogindra, *Vedaantasaara (The Essence of Vedaanta) of Sadananda Yogindra*, trans. Swami Nihilananda, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1968), no. 144, p. 90 (Hereafter: *VSS*).

100. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 144, pp. 89-90. Cf. Also Shankara, *Vaakyavritti of Shankaraachaarya*, trans. Swami Jaagadananda, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1979), no. 45. Cf. Also *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 89 (Hereafter: *VV*).

101. Cf. *VV*, nos. 3-4, 22, 44. Cf. Also *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 90.

102 *BSB*, IV, i, 3, p. 818. Cf. Also *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 90. Cf. Also T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Superimposition in Advaita Vedaanta*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., 1985), p. 67.

103 Negative method attempts to arrive at the truth of a word by negating those attributes that are not in that word. The formula used by this method is `*neti neti*' (not this, not this).

Cf. *BU*, II. Cf. also Shankara, *Upadeshasaahasrii of Shankarachaarya*, trans. Swami Jagadananda, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1979), I, i, 18, 21-23 (Hereafter: *UI*). The direct, positive method attempts to describe positive attributes that are contained in the word. Cf. *TU*, II, i, 1; III, vi, 1.

104. Cf. *VV*, no. 28.

105. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 29-36.

106. Cf. *VSS*, no. 145, pp. 91-92.

107. Cf. *VV*, nos. 11-27.

108. *VSS*, no. 147, p. 91. Cf. Also *VV*, nos. 39-41.

109. Cf. *VSS*, no. 148, pp. 91-92.

110. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 149-154, pp. 92-96.

111. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 155-158, pp. 96-98. Cf. Also *VV*, no. 38. Cf. Also Shankara, *Panchadaasi*, trans. Hari Prasad Shastri, (London: Shanti Sadan, 1956), 7. 75 (Hereafter: *PI*).

112. Gangaa is the Sanskrit name for the river Ganges.

113. Cf. *VSS*, nos. 153, 159-169, pp. 95, 98-105.

114. Cf. *ibid.*

115. Cf. Eliot Deutsch, p. 49.

116. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 50.

117. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 39.

118. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 330-333. Cf. Also *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 30, p. 61.

119. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, p. 331. Cf. Also *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 30, pp. 61-62.

120. Radhakrishnan S., *The Principal Upanishads*, p. 698.

121. Cf. Rene Guenon, *Man and His Becoming according to Vedaanta*, trans. Richard Nicholson, (London: Luzag & Co., 1945), pp. 112-113.

122. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 7, pp. 14-15.

123. Cf. *ibid.*, nos., 11,40, pp. 22-23, 82-83.

124. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 23, pp. 47-48.

125. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 41, pp. 83-84.

126. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 43, pp. 87-88.

127. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 44, pp. 88-89.

128. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 46, p. 91.

129. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 53, pp. 105-107.

130. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 47-48, pp. 92-96.

131. *Ibid.*, no. 54, p. 108.

132. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 54, pp. 108-109.

133. *Ibid.*, no 55, p. 109.

134. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 57, p. 113.

135. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 62, pp. 121-122.

136. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 63-64, pp. 122-125.

137. *BUB*, III, xxviii, 7.

138. Cf. *ibid.*

139. Ramamurthi A., p. 19.

140. *BUB*, II, iv, 14.

141. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 99.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

143. Cf. *BSB*, I, i, 4, p. 22.

144. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 136. Cf. Also *BUB*, IV, iii, 23.

145. Cf. *BUB*, IV, iii, 21.

146. Cf. *ibid.*, II, iv, 12.

147. *MU*, III, ii, 8. Cf. Also *PU*, VI, 5.

148. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 103.

149. Cf. *BUB*, III, iv, 2.

150. Shankara, *Bhagavat Giita Bhaashya*, trans. Mahadeva Sastri, (Madras: V. Ramaswami Sastrulu & Sons, 1961), XIII, 2 (Hereafter: *BGB*).

151. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 104.

152. *BUB*, IV, iv, 6.

153. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 115.

154. Cf. *BUB*, III, v, 1.

155. *UI*, II, xvii, 40, p. 203.

156. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 22.

157. Cf. *UI*, II, xviii, 24, p. 225.

158. *Ma.U.*, VIII.

159. *UI*, II, xviii, 24, p. 225. Cf. Also Ramamurthi A., p. 23.

160. Cf. *TUB*, II, 1.

161. Cf. Satchidananda Murthi, *Reason and Revelation in Advaita Vedaanta*, (Waltair: Andhra University Press, 1959), p. 64.

162. *UI*, I, ii, 79, p. 51.

163. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, no. 1, p. 118.

164. Cf. *BUB*, I, iv, 7.

165. Cf. *ibid.*

166. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 58.

167. Cf. *BUB*, I, iv, 22.

168. Cf. *ibid.*, IV, iv, 22. Ch

CHAPTER TWO

REMOVAL OF IGNORANCE:

THE CONDITION FOR SELF-REALIZATION

In the first chapter we have elaborated the state of self-realization as a state in which one recognizes the identity of his true self, *Aatman*, with *Brahman*. In order that a seeker can move towards in realizing this state, he should remove the state of ignorance that prevents the seeker to know his true nature. Therefore, removal of ignorance is the first condition for the actualization of *Brahmaanubhava*. In this chapter, we could make an attempt to study the nature, cause, consequences and characteristics of the state of ignorance. This knowledge would help the aspirant to strive for self-realization.

2.1. NATURE AND CAUSE OF IGNORANCE:

Sadaananda in his *Vedaantasaara* describes ignorance as "something positive though intangible, which cannot be described either as being or non-being . . . and is antagonistic to knowledge. Its existence is established from such experiences as `I am ignorant'."[1] This statement must be understood in the context of Nyaaya School and its views regarding ignorance. Nyayikaas defined ignorance as a mere absence of knowledge, and so, for them ignorance is a mere negation. The content of the above description of ignorance refutes the Nyaaya view of ignorance and states the Vedaanta view on the topic of ignorance. For a Vedaantist, ignorance is not a mere negation of knowledge. If ignorance is only a negation of knowledge, one might wonder as to the type of knowledge of which it is a negation. Knowledge can be understood in three ways. Firstly, knowledge can be used as synonymous with the witness or the perceiver of knowledge.[2] Its absence cannot be considered as ignorance, because it is eternal and so can never be associated with the state of negation. Secondly, a particular function of the mind can be understood as knowledge.[3] Here, the term `knowledge' is used in the indirect sense, because mental function can never illumine an object, if the self that underlies them does not illumine these mental functions.[4] Since self is a permanent presence behind all mental functions, under no circumstances can this knowledge exist in a negative state. Thirdly, ignorance can mean negation of particular knowledge or universal knowledge. Particular knowledge cannot be negated, because even if a person says that he does not know anything, yet he does not loose the sense of perception. Therefore, even though he many not perceive a particular object, he may perceive another. There cannot be any negation of universal knowledge, as particular knowledge is based on universal knowledge, and without the latter the former is not possible. Besides, the knowledge that is eternal and ever existent can never be associated with negation. Thus, the claim of the Vedaantin that ignorance is not a mere negation is true.[5]

Since ignorance is not a mere negation, it is something positive. When we say that ignorance is positive it does not mean that it is an absolute substance like *Brahman*. If it were true, there would be no liberation, as the eternal ignorance would not allow the dawn of knowledge. The term `positive' is used to distinguish ignorance from mere negation. Ignorance is different from reality and unreality. It is neither masculine nor feminine, but neuter. It can never be truly explained by reason, as human reason is always tainted by ignorance. It cannot be proved by knowledge, as when knowledge dawns, ignorance vanishes like darkness before light. Ignorance is unintelligible and so it cannot bear any proof. It is like the imagination of a blind man about the sun. As unintelligible, it is indescribable. It is neither unreal, nor real; it is neither with parts, nor without parts; it is neither separable from knowledge, nor inseparable from it. Advaita Vedaanta sees in ignorance a way to explain the phenomenal world of names and forms, that is superimposed on *Brahman*, the absolute reality behind the universe and *Aatman* the substratum that underlies the empirical ego.[6] In the state of ignorance the unreal is superimposed on the real. Thus, superimposition is the nature of the state of ignorance. In this section we could briefly study about superimposition, the nature of ignorance and its cause, viz., *maayaa* in its twofold aspects.

2.1.1. Nature of Ignorance: Superimposition:

In this section, we clarify the nature of ignorance by analyzing the meaning of superimposition. We would also take up the question about the possibility of the superimposition of *Brahman*, the all-pervading reality.

2.1.1.1. Meaning of Superimposition:

Super imposition (*adhyaaropa* or *adhyaasa*) literally means the mistaken ascription or imputation of one thing for another. By superimposing, one attributes to a thing, qualities of essential nature, which do not belong to it. In his introduction to the *Vedaanta-suutras*, Shankara defines superimposition as "an awareness similar in nature to memory that arises on a different (foreign) basis a result of some past experience."[7] Thus, it is the apparent presentation to the consciousness, by way of remembrance, of something previously observed, in some other thing. In other words, superimposition takes place, when the qualities of one thing which are not immediately present, through memory given to or projected upon another thing that is present to the consciousness and identified with it.[8] "Superimposition, therefore, is erroneous cognition (*mithyaa-jnaana*), illusory appearance (*avabhaasa*): it is the cognition of `that' in what is not `that'."[9] In the example of the snake being superimposed on the rope, or a man being superimposed on a tree stump in semi-darkness, the rope and the tree stump presented to the consciousness are, in fact, taken as a snake or as a man respectively. It is due to the mistaken attribution of what is known and remembered in the previous perception. Thus, the judgments `this is a snake' and `this is a man' are the result of a positive identification between what is experienced from the previous experience (the snake and the man) and what is perceived right now (the rope and the tree stump).[10]

Superimposition is different from experiencing similar things in different situations. For example as person sees a cow and there is an appearance of `cowness'. He then sees another cow, which also brings him an appearance of `cowness'. This cognition is valid, but not illusory. Superimposition is also distinct from an experience in which a person is seen at a particular place earlier and having seen again now, is recognized as a person who was seen before. It is also a valid cognition. Superimposition is not same as recollection, because in recollection one recalls something experienced earlier and presents to one's mind. Thus, the non-presence of an object is the essence of recollection. In the two experiences mentioned above, viz., the appearance of cowness in the second cow and the recognition of a person earlier and now, the objects are directly present at the time of cognition. But in recollection the object is directly not present, but only present in the image of the past experience. Superimposition is also different from some other illusory experiences such as a dream experience, the appearance of a white shell as yellow because of bile, and sugar tasting bitter because of fever. In these cases, there is an appearance of something, which one has already experienced earlier, viz., the content of the dreams, such as elephants or tiger, the yellowness of white shell, and the bitterness of the sugar. But, these appearances have more like the nature of recollection, and the content of the dream, yellowness of the white shell and the bitterness of the sugar are illusory recollections. So they are different from superimposition. The appearance involved in superimposition is based on an illusory cognition, rather than an illusory recollection. In the example of the rope-snake, the snake that is cognized is illusory. It is superimposed on the rope that is real. Thus, in superimposition there is a mixing up of the real and the unreal, the true and the untrue. In the rope-snake example, the real snake was seen earlier and this experience remains in the form of memory. Therefore, the perceiver of the snake does not experience the real snake. Nor does he recognize the snake as a mere recollection. But in perceiving the rope, he cognizes in it a snake, by way of superimposing the qualities of the snake on rope. Thus, the locus of superimposition is the rope, while the superimposed is the snake and its qualities.[11]

Different schools interpret the notion of superimposition differently. The fundamental question raised by these schools relates to the status of the object that superimposed. In other words, they ask the question as to the reality or unreality of the superimposed object. The *Anyathaakyaativaadins* and *Aatmakhyaativaadins* say that superimposition consists in attribution of qualities of one thing to another, even though they explain this differently. *Anyathaakyaativaadins* say that in the experience of rope-snake, we have an initial vague awareness of `this' regarding the rope in front. The mind, unhappy with this vague awareness, looks for a distinct perception. But this craving for distinct perception is debarred due to some defect in the cognizer, his instrument of perception or the circumstances of perception. At the same time the similarity between the rope and the snake is brought to light in memory. This memory effects visual perception of the snake. Thus, the original vague awareness of the `this' is apprehended as `This is a snake'. The Nyaaya-Vaisesika schools subscribe to this view. The *Aatmakhyaativaadins* explain superimposition as follows. They say that the `this' of the externally perceivable rope is superimposed on the mentally present snake to for the erroneous judgment `This is a snake'. They explain this phenomenon psychologically. Due to some past impression inhering in the consciousness, there happens a simultaneous perception in the

consciousness of the external `this' and the internal snake. As a result the qualities of the externally perceived rope and the internally recollected snake get mixed up. Thus the form of the snake appears externally even though it is not, in fact, perceived. The Buddhist *Vijnaanavaadins* expound this theory.[12]

The *Akhyaavaadins* define superimposition as the error founded on the non-apprehension of the difference between the superimposed (unreal) and on which something is superimposed (real). Thus, for the exponents of this school, superimposition is due to the confusion arising from the absence of discrimination between the unreal and the real. This school does not accept the notion of erroneous knowledge, because, for them, the acceptance of this philosophical standpoint cast doubt on the validity of all cognition. In other words, the very fact one accepts the possibility of erroneous knowledge there arises the need to prove that a particular cognition is a valid one. Therefore, they do not accept superimposition as an erroneous knowledge. According to them, in superimposition we really have not one, but two perceptions. The real problem is that we fail to recognize the differences between the two perceptions. They illustrate it with the seashell -- silver example. On the one hand, we have the absolute knowledge of the `this' in the judgment `This is a sea-shell'. But the seashell fails to come to the range of cognition due to some defect in the factors involved in the process of perception or due to the similarity between the seashell and the silver. The perception of similarity between the two awakens in the memory the silver seen in the shop, even though the silver is not remembered in association with any of its earlier time or locality, but simply as silver. So the cognition of `this' and `silver' come together, without their differences being apprehended. Thus, for *Akhyaativaadhins*, the non-perception, of difference between the two judgments involved, is the cause of superimposition. The followers of the Prabhaakara School held this view. The *Asatkhyaativaadins* said that superimposition is the fictitious assumption of attributes contrary to the nature of that thing on which something else is superimposed. In other words, superimposition occurs when some opposite attributes are given to a substratum arbitrarily. Thus, for them, superimposition consists in the unreal appearing as if real. In the illustration seashell -- silver, the non-existing silver appearing as the as-if real silver. Again the non-existent water in a mirage appears as-if real water. The Buddhist *Suunya-Vaadins* (Nihilists) subscribed to this view.[13]

Having clarified the perception of superimposition according to each of these different schools, Shankara concludes that in spite of their differences in perception they all converge in the central idea that superimposition consists in mistakenly considering one thing as having the attributes of another.[14] From what we have said it is clear that superimposition is an illusory perception. In it, there are twofold illusions are at play, viz., the intrinsic and extrinsic. An intrinsic illusion is one, in which, the superimposed (reality) and that which superimposes (unreality) do not subsist together. When the real object appears, the illusion disappears and when the illusion manifests the reality is no more there. Only one of them is present at a time. We could take the example of the perception of a post as a ghost in semi-darkness, to illustrate intrinsic perception. When a person perceives a post as a ghost, the reality of the post is not manifested in his perception. When he sees the reality of the post, the unreality of the ghost ceases to exist. Both the post and the ghost are never simultaneously experienced in the intrinsic illusion. In an extrinsic

illusion both the illusory and the real object subsist together. Besides these two there is also the medium through which the illusion takes place. Thus, in extrinsic illusion, the real object, the illusory object and the medium are present. The classical example of extrinsic illusion is the reflection of an object in a mirror. Here, we see the object (reality), the reflected image (unreality) and the mirror (medium) between the two.[15]

It is possible that both, the intrinsic and the extrinsic illusions appear at the same time in a given situation. We have such an example in the rope-snake illustration. A boy seeing a rope mistakes it for a snake and creates a lot of furor, as he was convinced that it was a snake. Here, we have an intrinsic illusion, as a rope is taken for a snake. In the same situation, there also involves an extrinsic illusion. If we approach the boy and ask him to describe the snake he saw, he may describe it saying that it was three feet long, about two inches thickness, brown in color and lying coiled near the door of his house. If we go to the place where the rope is lying, we could find that all the descriptions of the boy said about the snake exactly fit the rope. Thus, we find that the properties the rope has are exactly the same as that of the illusory snake the boy saw. The medium through which the properties of the rope are reflected on the snake is the illusory snake itself. As long as this illusion lasts the same properties coexist both in the rope and in the illusory snake. This is a clear case of extrinsic illusion.[16] Thus, we find that both of these illusions take place simultaneously.

According to Advaita Vedaanta, the entire universe is as a result of both of these illusions. As a man is caught up in both, the intrinsic and extrinsic illusions he experiences the world of multiplicity. The universe is one, infinite and all-pervading reality, *Brahman*. Just as a rope is seen as a snake, so also the one infinite *Brahman* is seen as the world of names and forms. This is due to the intrinsic illusion in the cosmic level. Now the world itself serves as the medium for the creation of extrinsic illusion, just as the illusory snake is the medium for the illusion of rope-snake. The properties of eternity, infinity and reality, which belong to *Brahman*, have mirrored themselves in the world, in and through the medium of the world itself. Since we have here properties of *Brahman*, that of the world and the medium appearing together. Thus, we have an extrinsic illusion in the cosmic level. Because of these two types of illusions in the cosmic level, we do not see *Brahman*, the reality; but instead, we see the world as permanent and real, by projecting the attributes of reality on the world.[17] The world has an illusory existence like that of the snake in the rope-snake illustration. As this illusory world is considered as real, its attributes are superimposed on the absolute *Brahman*. According to Shankara the attributes of non-self (*anaatman*), i.e., the world of thought and matter, which has only phenomenal and relative existence, are falsely superimposed on *Brahman*. Thus, the ultimate reality, the absolute and changeless *Brahman*, appears as the multiplicity of the world, due to false superimposition of the unreal on the real. "The obstruction that prevents the recognition of the self (*Brahman*) . . . is the superimposition of what does not really exist and is not self-evident in the self (*Brahman*).[18] Thus, as long as one remains in the spell of *adhyaropa* or superimposition, he is going to consider the world of multiplicity and the names and forms (*nama-rupa*) as the ultimate and absolute reality.

2.1.1.2. Superimposition of *Brahman*:

After describing the nature of superimposition, Shankara raises the question, which could possibly be raised by a critic, whether this theory of superimposition is applicable to absolute and changeless *Brahman*? We can superimpose something or an attribute of something on another object only when we perceive the object on which we superimpose the quality in question. For instance, one can superimpose the idea of the snake on a rope only if the rope is presented to his perception. Therefore, for superimposition, understood in the sense of mistakenly attributing one thing to another, to take place the presence of the object on which something is superimposed, is necessary. This being so, how can one superimpose the phenomenal world on *Brahman* who is absolute, infinite and not apparent to our senses?[19] In other words, the knowledge of *Brahman* belongs to the level of transcendental knowledge (*Paara Vidhyaa*), and how can one who has not known the reality of *Brahman*, still being in the level of phenomenal knowledge (apaaraa *vidhyaa*), superimpose the phenomenal world on *Brahman*?

In his attempt to reply the question of the possibility of *Brahman* being superimposed by the multiplicity of the world, Shankara holds a positive view. In other words, he does not see any contradiction in the phenomenal world being superimposed on *Brahman*, the absolute reality. Clarifying this point he says that there is no rule that, in every case of superimposition, that which is superimposed must be directly perceptible to the senses. It is possible to think of superimposing a quality on an object that is not directly presented to our sense experience. We can illustrate it with the example of the sky. The sky is not the object of our senses. Yet we superimpose on the sky qualities such as the concavity of its surface and the blueness of its appearance. Thus, just as we superimpose the sky, which we do not directly perceive, with these qualities, we can also superimpose the qualities of the phenomenal world on *Brahman*, which is not the object of our direct perception. Hence, there is no impossibility of superimposing the non-self on the self, though the latter is opposed to the former.[20]

Again, although the absolute self is above subject-object distinction, it is not absolutely beyond apprehension, as it is apprehended as the content of the concept `I'. In other words, *Brahman* is objective in the sense that it is the object of the ego-idea. Besides, the self is opposed to the non-self and its existence is known to all, whether they are learned or ignorant through the ego-idea, which is a presentation of the self in the light of ignorance. Thus, the inner self is known to all as the `I' (ego-idea). No one doubts the existence of the self, as it is intuitively and immediately perceived, because of its self-evident nature.[21]

Having established the knowledge of the self as self-evident and that it is known to all as the `I', Shankara bases his argument for the superimposition of the phenomenal world on *Brahman*, in the ego-idea, which is the object of everyone's experience. Shankara points to two stages in the process of superimposition. In the first stage the ego-idea is superimposed on the inner self, which is existence and reality. *Aatman* is never an object of sense experience. Yet due to our ignorance we superimpose the idea of the private individuality, i.e., being someone, upon our awareness of our existence. In doing so, we fail to understand the absolute and universal character of *Aatman*, and consider it as the private property that belongs to an individual. This superimposition of the ego-idea on *Aatman* is the most significant act of a human being, which makes the inner self being

presented in our normal consciousness as `the object of the ego-idea'. As soon as this first level of superimposition is done, one begins to experience oneself, in terms of `I', `my', `mine', `separate existence', `private individual' and many other similar modes. In other words, as the result of the first level of superimposition, one loses the universal idea of *Aatman*, being absolute existence and considers oneself as an individual.[22]

The experience of the individual existence at the first level of superimposition sets in motion the second level of superimposition. Here, the ego-idea reaches outward, identifying itself with the body, physical and mental attributes and action, without ever being aware of the true nature of the `I'. Thus, for instance, one says about himself: `I am ill', `I am going home' and similar statement fully forgetting the absolute nature of *Aatman*. Then the superimposition still goes external, in that one attempts of superimpose individuality on purely external objects and conditions and own it for oneself. Thus, a person says statements like `This house of mine', `I am member of the parliament' and similar statements about himself. This process continues endlessly, because making oneself an individual, one tries to externalize his individuality everywhere and on every reality. Thus, one's ego is identified with every object in the universe. It, in turn, automatically superimposes a multiple world of objects and entities upon *Brahman*, which is one existence and reality. Thus, by attributing individuality and other qualities to oneself, one sees multiplicity everywhere and superimposes on *Brahman*, the world of names and forms, which is constituted of individuals like himself and different from himself. One identifies everything in the world with oneself. The inner self, which is the absolute principle looks on as if it is the witness to all these multiplicity. It is completely unaffected by these false attributes, yet makes them all possible, for without it the world of multiplicity cannot exist. Thus, the world of appearance basically depends on the ego-idea and once the ego-idea is removed from the consciousness, the world of appearance also disappears.[23] Shankara sums up these two levels of superimposition by which the phenomenal world is superimposed on *Brahman* as follows:

> . . . Superimposition means the cognition of some thing as some other thing. Thus, in accordance, as one's wife, children or other relatives are hale and hearty with all their limps in tact, or as they suffer from the loss of these limps one thinks `I myself am hale and hearty' or `I myself am injured'; thus, one superimposes external characteristics on the self. Similarly one superimposes the characteristics of the body when one has such ideas as `I am fat', `I am thin', `I am fair', `I stay', `I go' or `I scale'. So also one superimposes the attributes of the senses and organs when one thinks, `I am dumb', `I have lost my eye', `I am a eunuch', ` I am deaf' or `I am blind'. Similarly one superimposes attributes of internal organs such as desire, will, doubt, perseverance, etc. In the same way, one first superimposes the internal organ, possessed of the idea of ego on the self, the witness of all the manifestations of that organ; then by an opposite process one superimposes on the internal organ, etc. that self which is opposed to the non-self and which is the witness of everything. Thus, occurs this superimposition that has neither beginning nor end, but flows on eternally, that appears as the

> manifested universe and its apprehension, that conjures up agentship and enjoyership, and that is perceived by all persons. [24]

Now that we have clarified the nature of ignorance, by looking into the meaning of superimposition, and the superimposition of the phenomenal world on *Brahman*, we could move on to consider the cause of ignorance, viz., the *maayaa*.

2.1.2. Cause of Ignorance: *Maayaa*:

In this section we make an attempt to clarify the nature of *maayaa*, the cause of ignorance. We do this by spelling out its meaning, constituents and types.

2.1.2.1. Meaning of *Maayaa*:

Maayaa is the cause of superimposition.[25] It is *maayaa* that causes different modes of thinking, projections of worldly appearance and various conflicting ideas. It is antagonistic to knowledge, and is the source of all contradictions, relativities, dichotomies and polarities of human existence. There is a touch of mystery to the reality of *maayaa* and human intellect cannot attempt to exhaust its manifold forms, modes and possibilities. It not for *maayaa*, human existence would not have any novelty and a sense of wonder. *Maayaa* is not an empty concept that attempts to explain the passing nature of reality; but it has a scriptural foundation. Starting from the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Giita give an account of *maayaa*, as affecting human world and existence. We could elaborate the meaning of *maayaa* as understood in the scriptures.

We find the beginnings of the doctrine of *maayaa* in the Rig-Veda. The word `*maayaa*' and its derivatives are used in the Rig Vedic hymns over one hundred times.[26] Here, the term `*maayaa*' is used to mean supernatural powers that belong to gods. The god Indra is said to assume many forms through *maayaa*. Itis a power to transform oneself and assume various forms. Thus, in Rig-Veda the term `*maayaa*' is used in a general sense to mean the divine act or power by which the divinity makes a likeness of the eternal ideas inherent in its nature. [27] The appearance of the sun with bright light and splendor is attributed to the great power and *maayaa* of gods Varuna and Mitra.[28] In this text, unlike the former one, where Indra is said to assume many forms, *maayaa* refers to the power of creating and constructing objects characterized by forms and dimensions. Thus, *maayaa* here refers to the ability of Varuna and Mitra to create forms rather than assume forms. The phenomenal world is seen, therefore, as stemming from the creative activity of the *maayaa* of gods.[29] In the texts of Rig Veda that deal with Indra assuming forms, the term `*maayaa*' denotes the power and ability of gods to produce marvelous phenomena which lack certain degree of reality. But, in the texts that deal with creative power of Varuna and Mitra the term `*maayaa*' means the power of creating and constructing objects. Thus, we have two meanings assigned to the term `*maayaa*' in the Rig-Veda, viz., power (*prajnaa*) and deception or illusion (*kapata*). The idea of power goes with the idea of mystery; and thus *maayaa* means `the mysterious power of the will' (*sankalpa-sakti*).[30] Thus, in Rig-Vedic texts *maayaa* meant both the wisdom of the mysterious power of the will that make the

gods create the splendor of the phenomenal world, and the deceptive or illusory bringing about realities that lack certain degree of reality.

In the Upanishads, we find an indirect reference to *maayaa* as that which `covers' or `veils the truth.[31] Chaandogya Upanishad speaks of the covering of untruth that hides one from the ultimate truth, just as the surface of the earth hides the golden treasure hidden under it.[32] Brihdaaranyaka Upanishad and Iisha Upanishad tell of the golden disc covers the face of truth and suggest that the invocation of the grace of God would help one remove the veil and letting one see the truth. Svetaasvatra Upanishad also says that this unveiling of truth or the cessation of the world illusion (*vishva-maayaa-nivirttih*) can be brought about by the worship of God.[33] Upanishads also give direct statements about *maayaa*. In Svetaasvatara Upanishad we find a direct reference to the term `*maayaa*' and the Lord who possesses it is called Maayin, a wonder working powerful being who creates the universe by his power. The Lord Maayin, thus, is said to be the maker of the world, who creates the world with the help of *maayaa*.[34] Brihdaaranyaka Upanishad associates *maayaa* with god Indra, who takes many forms because of it.[35] Thus, in these two direct uses of *maayaa*, viz., as the creative power of the Lord, and as forms assumed by the Lord, it refers to what is within a person or to a quality peculiar to him rather than something exists out side. Thus, we find in the Upanishads the indirect and direct references to *maayaa*. In the indirect references, *maayaa* is seen as something independently existing and covering the truth, and the invocation of the grace of god is needed to remove it. The idea of *maaya* as veiling the truth brings in the meaning of `illusion' in the word `*maayaa*'. The direct references of *maayaa* as the power of the Lord to create, brings to light a more positive meaning of the word `*maayaa*'. Thus, we find in the Upanishads, as in Rig-Veda, twofold characterizations of the word `*maayaa*', viz., a positive one meaning creative power and a negative one meaning `illusion'.

In Bagavad Giita, *maayaa* is associated with *Iishvara*. It is the power that enables *Iishvara* to produce multiple nature. It is energy (*shakti*) of *Iishvara*, i.e., the power of self-becoming (*aatmavibhuuti*). This power is called *maayin*.[36] It is the power of *Iishvara* from which the world arises. The world is creation of *Iishvara* and *maayaa* is his power of manifestation. It is with the help of *maayaa*, that *Iishvara* measures out and molds forms. *Iishvara* is in full control of *maayaa*, for he would not be infinite and supreme existence if he were subject to *maayaa*. Yet it is *Iishvara's* power of manifestation (*kartum*) and non-manifestation *(a-kartum*) and other-manifestation (*anyathaa-kartum*).[37] *Iishvara* and *maayaa* are dependent and beginningless. At a later stage of Giita thought *maayaa* gradually comes to have a delusive character, as it is seen as hiding the real from our experience.[38]

Our consideration of the meaning of the term `*maayaa*' in the Rig-Veda, Upanishads and in the Giita, clearly points to its twofold meanings, viz., a positive and negative attribution of this term. Positively it means a creative power of *Iishvara*, while negatively it means a delusion or illusion. The former is a creative power of God with which he fashions the universe, while the latter is a veil that covers the real nature of truth and reality. These twofold uses of the term `*maayaa*' can also be understood in relation to the twofold derivations of this word. If the word `*maayaa*' is taken as having derived from the root `*ma*' which means `to measure', `to form' or `to build', and from the suffix `*ya*' which means `that

by which objects are given specific shape',[39] *maayaa* might refer to the positive meaning of the creative power of God. If the word `*maayaa*' is said to have derived from two words `*ma*' which means `not' and `*ya*' which means `that', then the term `*maayaa*' would literally mean `not that'.[40] In other words, in the light of the second derivation *maayaa* would mean the veiling of truth or an illusion. In the light of the above analysis one could say that *maayaa* points to both something real and unreal, something positive and negative. But its real nature cannot be truly analyzed or grasped. Heinrich Zimmer describes the popular perception of *maayaa* as follows:

> The Hindu mind associates such ideas as `transitory, ever changing, elusive, ever returning', with `unreality' [*maayaa*] and conversely `imperishable, steadfast and eternal' with `the real' [*Brahman*]. As long as the experiences and sensations that stream through the consciousness of an individual remain untouched by any widening, devaluating vision, the perishable creatures appear and vanish in the unending cycle of life (*samsaara* . . .) are regarded by him as utterly real. But the moment their fleeting character is discerned, they come to seem almost unreal -- as illusion or mirage, a deception of senses, the dubious figment of a too restricted, ego-centered consciousness. When understood and experienced in this manner, the world is *maayaa-maya*, `of the stuff of *maayaa*. *Maayaa* is `art': that by which an artifact, an appearance is produced.[41]

Having analyzed the doctrine of *maayaa* and its meaning in the light of the scriptures, we could now move on to see how Shankara takes up this doctrine and interprets it from the perspective of Advaita Vedaanta. For him the question -- when and how superimposition occurred or the ego-idea brought about the phenomenal world -- is not something we can intellectually grasp. The relationship between the finite and the infinite had been one of the major philosophical problems that baffled the mind of sages and thinkers. The Greco-Christian tradition attempted to face this issue by accepting that the finite has a reality of its own, and this reality was caused by the infinite, transcendental first cause. In other words, they held that the infinite first cause is the cause of the phenomenal world. Such a philosophical position would leave us with a situation in which the absolute God is submitting Himself to transformation and change. Besides, the question `why, at all, should God create?' would remain unanswered. In his attempt to solve this issue Shankara maintained that the world is not absolute, but relative. The world is *maayaa*, i.e., it is the world of appearance. The concept of *maayaa* applies to the phenomenal existence, which consists of the world of names and forms. The ultimate substratum in relation to which the appearance of names and forms take place is *Brahman*, the one without a second. The world of *maayaa* is not non-existent, yet it differs from *Brahman*, the reality. *Maayaa* is not real, because it ceases to exist at the dawn of knowledge. Thus, for Shankara, the world-appearance is *maayaa* and *Brahman* identical with *Aatman* is the only reality. He says further that the fundamental unreality of the world caused by *maayaa* can never be understood as long as one is viewing him from the phenomenal (*vyavahaarika*) perspective. But the unreality of the *maayaa* can be understood only in relation to the state of *Brahmaanubhava*. For a realized man the multiplicity of *maayaa* ceases to exist, just a dream has no reality when a dreamer wakes up from his sleep. Thus, the attempt to know

what caused *maayaa* involves transcending *maayaa*. When we do that *maayaa* vanishes. Thus, Shankara concludes that the relationship between *Brahman* and *maayaa*, by its very nature, unknowable and indefinable by any process of human intellect. That is why Shankara maintains an enlightened agnosticism with regard to the origin of *maayaa* and its relationship to *Brahman*.[42]

Speaking of the nature of *maayaa* in his *Dakshinamurti Stotra* (An Ode to the Divine Self) Shankara defines *maayaa* as follows:

> To the *Aatman* who, deluded by *maayaa*, sees . . . the universe in variety, as cause and effect, as master and servant, as teacher and disciple, as father and son, and so on; to Him who is incarnate in the Teacher, to Him who is Effulgent Form Facing to the South, to Him . . . be this bow.[43]

Commenting on this *stotra*, Sri Suresvaraachaarya in his exposition named *Maanasollasa* (Brilliant Play of Thought) describes *maayaa* as follows:

> The name *maayaa* is given to an appearance, which cannot be accounted for. It is not non-existent, because it appears; neither it is existent because it is nullified. It is not distinct from Light, as the dark shadow is distinct from the sun. Neither is it identical with the Light, because it is contradiction in terms. Or, *maayaa* may be compared to the shadow, which conceals the sun from the view of those who are blind by day. Here the sun's light itself appears to be a shadow; and that shadow, therefore, has no distinct existence from light. . . . This harlot of *maayaa*, appearing only so long as not scrutinized, does deceive the *Aatman* by her false affection of coquetry.[44]

Having clarified the meaning of *maayaa*, we could proceed with our discussion as did Shankara himself, noting that *maayaa* is both a statement of fact and a principle.[45] As a statement of fact it is the present, the past and all the possible worlds. "It is a domain of antithetical situations, subject-object distinctions, paradoxes and animosities"[46] that characterize the world of our everyday perception. As a principle, like *Brahman*, *maayaa* is eternal and beginningless. "*Maayaa* is beginningless (*anaadhi*), for time arises only with it; it is unthinkable (*achintya*), for all thought is subject to it; it is indescribable (*anirvachaniya*) for all language results from it."[47] In this sense *maayaa* has been described by Vedaantins as the inexplicable power of the supreme Lord, by which all the changes in the world is brought about.[48] As the phenomenal world, it cannot be considered either a being (*sat*) or a non-being (*asat*). Though the world of appearance is unreal in the sense, that it does not exist to the one who has attained the true and the highest knowledge, it is real in the sense that it appears to exist as long as ignorance persists. To quote Shankara:

> *Maayaa*, in her potential aspect, is divine power of the Lord. She has no beginning. . . . It is from the effects she produces that her existence is inferred by the wise. It is she who gives birth to the whole universe. She is neither being, nor non-being, nor a mixture of both. She is neither an indivisible whole, nor composed of parts, nor a mixture of both. She is most strange. Her

> nature is inexplicable. Just as knowing a rope to be a rope destroys the illusion that is a snake, so *maayaa* is destroyed by the direct experience of *Brahman* -- the pure, the free, the one without a second.[49]

The *maayaa* is known to the consciousness, the witnessing agent. Therefore, it is taken as real. But, at the same time it cannot be regarded as real as the absolute reality (*Brahman*). Nor can it be viewed as being coexistent with *Brahman*, as it loses its existence as soon as knowledge is attained. It can be compared to a fog that covers the sun from view; but when the sun is in full view, the fog vanishes. *Maayaa* is real in the sense that it presents objects to our perception; but unreal in that it is not transcendentally existing as *Brahman*. Thus, *maayaa* is something mysterious. It seems to have no definite beginning in the sense of having a definite cause. At the same time it produces something that has the appearance of reality; and this appearance loses itself, when the truth of knowledge is dawned. So, we could say that *maayaa* is a principle, that cannot be explained, and which is the source of the fact that there are plurality and diversities in the universe.[50] Now that we have clarified the meaning of *maayaa* we could move on to analyze the constitution of *maayaa*.

2.1.2.2. Constitution of *Maayaa*:

To the question -- how *maayaa* causes these dichotomies, contradictions, plurality and subject-object distinctions -- Shankara replies that it is due to the three qualities (*gunaas*), viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, that constitute the being of *maayaa*. We could briefly mention the nature and functions of each of these three *gunaas*. *Sattvagunaa* is the highest quality. In its purest form, *sattva* implies tranquillity, equanimity, direct perception of *Aatman*, absolute peace and serenity, contentment, joy and steady devotion to *Aatman*. Since *sattva* is purity, even when it mixes with *rajasgunaa* and *tamasgunaa*, it does not block the way to liberation, but rather it lights up the path to self-realization, as *sattva* reveals *Aatman* as the sun brightens up everything in the phenomenal world. When *sattva* is mixed with other *gunnaas*, the seeker experiences absence of pride, purity, contentment, austerity, a desire to study the scriptures, self-surrender to God, harmlessness, truthfulness, continence and freedom from worldly passions. Beside, he possesses absence of greed, faith, devotion, longing for liberation, aversion to the things of this world and all other virtues that lead to God.[51]

The nature of *rajasgunaa* is activity. It is desire-ridden and agitated. It is the power of dynamism in the phenomenal world. Attachment, desire and similar qualities, and grief and similar moods of the mind are caused by *rajasgunaa*. Some other qualities associated with *rajasgunaa* are lust, anger, jealousy, egoism and envy. When *rajas* dominates a person, he would be passionately attached to worldly action. Thus, *rajasgunaa* is the cause of bondage and *samsaara*.[52] *Tamasgunaa* veils the real nature of an object, and makes it appear as something different from what it is. Some of the characteristics of *tamasgunaa* are failure to perceive the object as it really is, presenting a thing as other than what it is, wavering of the mind, taking illusions as real, ignorance, dullness, sleep, delusion and stupidity. Even if a person is intelligent, clever, learned and possesses a keen faculty of analysis, if overtaken by *tamasgunaa* he would never be able to reach the true nature of *Aatman*, in spite of repeated explanation. He takes appearance for reality because of the obscuring power of

tamasgunaa. A man under the grip of *tamas* is compared by the Vedaantins as a sleep-waker or an unconscious log of wood. *Tamas* is responsible for the person's continued subjection to the cycle of birth and rebirth. Besides, it also helps the activity of *rajasgunaa*.[53]

The presence, the absence or the combinations of these three *gunaas* in varying degrees is that which effects different stages of in the cosmic cycle.[54] When *sattvagunaa* is predominant, there is produced the *jnaanashakti*, which is responsible for the working of the whole cognitive process. The preponderance of *rajas* and *tamas* produces the *kriyashakt*. The *kriyashakti* has two powers, viz., the concealing power (*avaranashakti*) and the power of projection (*vikshepashakti*).[55] It is by the power of concealment that *maayaa* veils the true nature of *Brahman* and *Aatman*. A small particle of cloud by obstructing the vision of the observer, conceals as it were, the solar disc which extents over many miles. Similarly *maayaa* enshrouds man's spiritual intelligence and conceals the self, which is unlimited and not subject to transmigration, thereby preventing to realize its identity with *Brahman*. *Avernashakti*, therefore, is the negative aspect of concealment. It is that force which enables *maayaa*, so to enshroud *Aatman* that he becomes the subject of pleasure, pain and misery.[56] "The self covered by this (concealing power of ignorance) [*maayaa*], may become subject to *samsaara* (relative existence) characterized by one's feeling as an agent, the experiencing subject, happy, miserable, etc., just as a rope may become a snake due to the concealing power of one's ignorance."[57] The projecting power of *maayaa* is always present with the concealing power. It is the positive aspect of *maayaa* that brings manifold realities in the world. It constitutes the world of names and forms. *Vikshepashakti* is identical with the power of creating. With this power, *maayaa* creates the appearance (*vivartha*), superimposes (*adhyaasa*) the unreal on the real and leads one to error (*bhranti*), like that of a rope-snake or a shell-silver. Therefore, the power of *maayaa*, which creates illusion or mistaken impression on the self (*Aatman*) and creates all -- from the subtle bodies to the cosmos -- is called *vikshepashakti*.[58]

Brahman, the absolute consciousness, associated with *maayaa* and its twofold powers of concealment and projection, is said to be ultimate cause of this phenomenal world. Any creation involves three causes, viz., the material cause, the efficient cause and the instrumental cause. To illustrate this we take the example of the creation of a pot. Here, the mud is the material cause, the potter is the efficient cause and the potter's wheel is the instrumental cause. In the creation of the finite world *Brahman* is said to be all these three causes.[59] Advaitins explaining this point say that *Brahman* associated with *maayaa*, when looked upon form the standpoint of its limitation (*upaadhi*) is said to be the material cause of the universe.[60] This point can be illustrated with the help of the example of bubble in water. A bubble in water consists of water. The wall of a bubble and the substratum upon which it exists are made of water. The bubble is created out of water and ends up in water. Just as water is the material cause of the bubble and in which it comes and goes, similarly *Brahman* is the material cause, ultimate substratum, in which the apparent plurality of the phenomenal world manifests and ceases to manifest.[61] Another classical example given to illustrate *Brahman* as the material cause of the universe is that of the spider and its web. It is a known fact that a spider makes the web, by using a secretion from its own glands. In the weaving of the web, the material cause is the spider, when seen from the point of view

of its body. In the same way *Brahman* is said to be the material cause of the universe when viewed from its *upaadhi* aspect.[62]

Brahman is spoken as the efficient and instrumental cause, when its association with *maayaa* is considered from the stand of its conscious aspect.[63] *Brahman's* efficient causality over the world can be illustrated with the example of the spider and the web. The spider is considered as the efficient cause of the web when seen from the point of view of its own self. The spider is the efficient cause of the web because without the life principle inherent in the spider, i.e., the material present in the spider, its body cannot weave the web. Thus, it is the life principle in the spider, i.e., its self is that provides efficient causality for netting the web. Similarly, *Brahman*, the supreme self, one without a second, through its own power of *maayaa* creates the universe, from gross matter to the highest cosmic manifestations. In this manner *Brahman* is the efficient cause of the universe.[64] *Brahman's* instrumental causality over the world can be explained with the help of the illustration, the magnet and the iron filings. Inactive iron filings when placed near the magnet show sign of movement, though they are inactive, because the magnet by way of attraction brings movement in them. In the same way ignorance which is inactive and lifeless shows activity because of its affinity to *Brahman*. Since it is the presence of *Brahman* that activates the *maayaa* and starts the process of the emergence of the phenomenal world, *Brahman* can be seen as instrumental to the activity and manifestation of *maayaa*.[65] Thus, *Brahman* is also the instrumental cause of the world process, besides being the efficient and material causes.

One could oppose the proposed Advaitic position of *Brahman* being the material, efficient and instrumental causes of the universe, by saying if *Brahman* is the cause of the universe, it would be as conscious and real as *Brahman*, as the cause and the effect are one and the same. To this objection, the Advaitin would propose *vivarhavaada* (the law of causation), which says that creation is the transformation of the cause into effect, without the cause losing its own character. From this it is concluded that creation is more an apparent transformation than a real one. *Vivartavaada* is fundamentally different from *parinaamavaada* (the law of evolution), which says that creation involves an evolution of the effect from the cause, and so admits a real change in the cause. For Advaita Vedaantin, the world is a *vivarta*, the unreal and appearance of *Brahman*. Just as the snake is the *vivarta*, of the rope in the rope-snake example, so also the world is the *vivarta* of *Brahman*. Thus, the positing of *Brahman*, as the total cause of the universe would in no way lead one to the conclusion that the material world caused by *Brahman* must be of the nature of *Brahman*. *Brahman* is real; *maayaa* is unreal and so the phenomenal world is also unreal.[66]

Thus, *maayaa*, possessing the powers of concealment and projection, is that which transforms as it were, the pure self -- immutable, unattached and indivisible -- into the individual ego (*jiiva*) and the world. In this manner, by simultaneous interplay of the concealing and the projecting powers, *maayaa* veils the true and the real nature of the absolute reality. In doing so it `forms' or `creates' the world of appearance, just as ignorance conceals the nature of the rope and creates the illusion of the snake.[67] Having clarified the constitution of *maayaa*, we could, in the next section, consider the types of *maayaa*.

2.1.2.3. Types of *Maayaa*:

Maayaa is said to be one or many depending on the mode of observing it either collectively or individually.[68] Advaita Vedaantins, while recognizing the absolute existence of *Brahman* alone, do admit the distinction of the finite beings, from the relative standpoint of ignorance, in order to explain meaningfully the states of bondage and liberation. Scriptures speak of these two states as a matter of fact. These two states are not possible for one and the same being simultaneously. Again, scriptures point to attaining liberation by two means, viz., the immediate process and the gradual process. All these indicate the diversity of finite beings. The recognition of diversity of finite beings naturally leads to the consideration of the distinction between the collective and individual states of ignorance. If this distinction in *maayaa* were not accepted, the liberation from ignorance of one man would imply the liberation of all. Again it would be impossible for one to attain liberation by way of knowledge (*jnaana*) on account of others remaining in the state of ignorance. For these reasons Advaitins accept different types of ignorance, and they limited to the relative point of the phenomenal (*vyavakaarika*) level and is not applicable to the absolute perspective of *Brahmaanubhava*.[69] Thus, for Advaitins, *maayaa* appears in two different modes, namely the collective or the cosmic (*samashti*) and the individual (*vyasti*). From the collective point of view it is seen as one, whereas from the individual point of view it is many. They explain the two modes using the illustration of the trees and the lake. From the collective point of view a group of trees is considered as a forest or a grove, while at the same time a grove can be seen as many individual trees. Again, water in a lake can be considered as one from the collective mode, yet from the individual aspect it can be sees as different quantities of water. Similarly, *maayaa* can be considered as aggregate and individual. To quote *Vedaantasaara* on this point: "As trees . . . considered as an aggregate are denoted as one, viz., the forest, or water collectively named as the reservoir, so also ignorance existing in *jiivas* being diversely manifested, [i.e., individual *maayaa*], is collectively represented as one. . . ."[70] The individual *maayaa* is called *avidhyaa*.[71]

Maayaa, in its cosmic aspect is the principle of individuation. It is *Brahman's* power of becoming or appearing as many. Therefore, the origin of the world-process and the changes that take place in the world are attributed to the cosmic *maayaa*. It is the capacity to bring the entire existence appearing as objective to the finite consciousness. Thus, in cosmic *maayaa*, the idea of origination, which implies power and will, is more apparent. But it denies objectively real and manifests objectively false. Collective *maayaa* is the mysterious primeval ignorance that exists eternally in relation to consciousness and which is free from all forms of differentiation. In it *sattvagunaa* predominates the *rajasgunnaa* and the *tamasgunaa*.[72] The collective *maayaa* is superior to the individual *maayaa*, because the former indicates *Iishvara*, the *Sagunaa Brahman*, while the latter refers to *jiiva*, the individual ego. While *Iishvara* cannot be deluded by the power of ignorance, the *jiiva* is totally under the sway of ignorance.[73] The individual *maayaa* (*avidhyaa*) is the principle of ignorance that intercepts things from view. Thus, in it, the idea of obscuration is more prominent. *Avidhyaa* brings about such obscurations by misinterpretation of one thing for another, like a rope for a snake. It denies knowledge of identity and projects subjectively false ideas. In it *rajasgunaa* and *tamasgunaa* dominate.[74] Finite beings are influenced by *maayaa* in its individual aspect. "As a forest, from the standpoint of the units that compose

it, may be designated as a number of trees, and as a reservoir from the same point of view may be spoken of as quantities of water, so also ignorance when denoting separate units is spoken of as many."[75] Thus, individual *mayaa* refers to individual finite beings. Even though, we designate *maayaa* as collective and individual because they refer to *Iishvara* and *jiivas* respectively, they are identical like a forest and trees or a reservoir and the water. In other words, there is no essential difference between the collective and individual *maayaa*. Just as a tree is essentially of the nature of the forest and a jar of water is of the nature of the reservoir, so also both collective and individual *maayaa* are essentially illusory and has for their substratum, *Brahman*, one without a second.[76]

Now that we have clarified the meaning, the constitution and the types of *maayaa*, we could move on to dwell on the consequences of *maayaa*, both in its cosmic and individual aspects in the next section.

2.2. CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORANCE:

According to Shankara whether it be in it cosmic or individual aspect, *maayaa* veils the true nature of *Brahman*, the absolute reality. It serves as the limiting adjunct (*upaadhi*) for *Brahman*, just as clouds veil the rays of the sun. Now, we could elaborate the effects of *maayaa* in both of these aspects.

2.2.1. Effects of Cosmic *Maayaa*:

Maayaa, in its cosmic aspect, in collaboration with its constituents, viz., the *sattvagunaa*, the *rajasgunaa* and the *tamasgunaa*, brings about the illusion of the multiple phenomenal world, by superimposing the whole of creation on *Brahman* (*Aatman*). This superimposition takes threefold aspects depending on the preponderance of the constituent *gunaas* of *maayaa*, viz., the causal body, the subtle body and the gross body. As a result, "the indivisible *Brahman* appears threefold through illusion and not in reality. These forms are -- `the sphere of gods' [causal body], `the sphere pertaining to the body' [gross body] and `the sphere of the elements' [subtle body]."[77] In this section, we could elaborate the consequences of cosmic *maayaa* in the levels of the causal body, the subtle body and the gross body.

2.2.1.1. Cosmic *Maayaa* and the Causal Body:

The cosmic *maayaa* leads to the evolution of the world of names and forms. In the cosmic absorption of everything in *Brahman*, there comes about a sudden change, when *Brahman* wills to evolve from within and express itself. This, in turn, disturbs the indeterminate *maayaa* and its constituents, viz., the *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which in turn sets in motion the creation of the phenomenal world. "The supreme *Brahman*, eternally free and immutable existed alone. That owing to the superimposed identity with its own *maayaa*, became as it were the seed of the universe as the unformed and the unnamed."[78] When *Brahman* accepts *maayaa* in its *sattvic* element, it becomes *Iishvara*. *Brahman*, in association with *sattva* is the all-knower, because everything is reflected in its intelligence. As veiled by the cosmic ignorance *Brahman* is called *Iishvara* or *Sagunaa Brahman*. *Iishvara*

is the supreme Lord, who is worshipped by the ordinary people as their personal God, in the forms of different deities. According to Shankara, *Brahman* with qualities is a step lower than the *Brahman* without any qualities (*Nirgunaa Brahman*). *Iishvara* is the highest manifestation of the absolute *Brahman* in the phenomenal world. Besides, he is the highest reality the human mind can grasp and the human heart can love. Shankara also holds that the *Iishvara* is omniscient, omnipotent and has power over inferior limiting adjuncts. "Consciousness [Pure *Brahman*] associated with this [cosmic *maayaa*] is endowed with qualities as omniscience, universal Lordship, all-controlling powers, etc. and is designated as undifferentiated, the inner guide, the cause of the world and *Iishvara* on account of its being the illuminator of the aggregate of ignorance [cosmic *maayaa*]."[79] Thus, *Iishvara* is all-knower, as he is the witness of all animate and inanimate objects in the universe. He has universal Lordship, as he gives rewards and punishments to finite beings according to the merits of their action (*karma*). *Iishvara* has total control over all, because he directs all mental propensities of finite beings. Cosmic *maayaa* is said to be associated with only with *Iishvara* and is manifest only to him, though he is never influenced by it. Though *Iishvara* is the highest manifestation of *Brahman* in the universe, he is not absolute existence as *Brahman*, because he is as unreal as the phenomenal world. In other words, *Brahman* looked upon from the standpoint of the world, as associated with cosmic *maayaa* is *Iishvara*.[80]

Cosmic *maayaa* associated with *Brahman* in relation to the three *gunaas* brings to light the different aspects of *Iishvara's* Godhead. Thus, cosmic *maayaa* also gives rise to the conception of *Iishvara*, as the creator (Brahmaa), the preserver (Vishnu) and the destroyer (Siva). These three gods are nothing other than *Iishvara* with reference to three *gunaas*. When *Iishvara* is limited by *maayaa* in its *sattvic* aspect, i.e., *sattva* as the predominating *upaadhi*, it is called Vishnu. He sustains and preserves the cosmic order. When *Iishvara* has *maayaa* with *rajas* as the dominant *upaadhi*, it is called Brahmaa. He is the creator of the cosmic order. When *maayaa* dominates *Iishvara* with *tamas*, it is called the Siva or Rudhra. He is the destroyer of the universe. Thus, *Iishvara* with the help of the *sattva* preserves, with the help of *rajas* creates and using *tamas* destroys.[81]

Thus, *Iishvara*, in these three aspects of his Godhead, exercises total control over the phenomenal existence, and plays an essential role in the creation of the world. The limiting adjuncts that are characteristic of *Iishvara* with *sattvic* element is superior limiting adjuncts (*niratisayoopaadhi*). *Iishvara*, in association with the *tamisic* element, acquires lower limiting adjuncts (*nihinoopaadhi*). *Iishvara's* superior limiting adjuncts direct the inferior limiting adjuncts, by *rajasic* elements of *maayaa*, thereby originates the elements of nature. To quote Shankara: "The Lord (*Iishvara*) endowed with superior limiting adjuncts",[82] "rule the souls with inferior adjuncts."[83] Thus, *Iishvara* in association with *maayaa* and the constituent *gunaas* form the material and efficient cause of the cosmic order. The cosmic *maayaa*, associated with *Iishvara* is known as the causal body, because *Iishvara* is the cause of all. In other words, *Iishvara* is the causal seed that form the foundation of the world of names and forms. Therefore, the body associated with *Iishvara* is known as the causal body.[84] Now that we have looked into the activity of the cosmic *maayaa* in relation to the causal body, we could move on to see its activity in relation to the subtle bodies of the cosmos.

2.2.1.2. Cosmic *Maayaa* and the Subtle Body:

Cosmic *maayaa* in association with *rajasgunaa* and *tamasgunaa* produces lower limiting adjuncts in *Iishvara*. These lower limiting adjuncts of *Iishvara* lies at the root of evolution of the five subtle elements (*suukshmabhuutas*), viz., the ether (*akaasha*), the air (*vaayu*), the fire (*teejas*), the water (*aap*) and the earth (*mahii*). These elements do not intermix, as they are pure and simple. They have distinctive qualities: *akaasha* -- sound, *vaayu* -- energy, *teejas* -- heat and light, *aap* -- taste and *mahii* -- potency affecting smell.[85] "From that [the supreme *Brahman* conditioned by cosmic *maayaa*, i.e., *Iishvara*] originated Ether, which is characterized by sound. From Ether, Air, having the characteristic of touch, comes into existence. Thence again Light, characterized by form was produced. From Light arose Water, of the nature of taste. From Water comes out Earth, with its distinctive quality of smell." [86]

These subtle elements that emerge from the lower limiting adjuncts of *Iishvara*, though contain particle of *sattvagunaa* and *rajasgunaa*, have a greater preponderance of *tamasgunaa*. In comparison with the other elements ether has the greatest amount of *sattvagunaa* and earth has the greatest amount of *tamasgunaa*. Thus, there is a decrease of *sattva* and increase of *tamas* from ether to earth.[87] "On account of the preponderance of inertia observed in them [the five subtle elements], their cause also must have an excess of the quality of darkness (*tamas*). At the time [of creation of the subtle elements], the qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are reproduced in ether, etc., in accordance with the law that the qualities of the cause determine the qualities of the effect."[88]

These five subtle elements (*suukshmabhuutas*) that have evolved through the lower limiting adjuncts of *Iishvara* is said to be subtle, because they have no gross forms and they are unable to participate in any action. These elements are rudimentary in nature (*tanmaatras*), as they possess only their own characteristic attribute. For instance, the rudimentary element ether has only the characteristic of sound. So also are the other *tanmaatras*. These rudimentary elements, when first evolved, were in an uncompounded state (*apanchiikrita*). They were totally unmixed and unseparated from each other. Thus, at their creation, the subtle elements were simple and unaloyed.[89] All these subtle elements constitute the subtle body in the cosmic level. These are the effects of the cosmic *maayaa* in the level of the subtle bodies.

Now that we have clarified the evolution of the cosmic subtle body, we could proceed to explain the emergence of the gross matter from the subtle elements, by the activity of the cosmic *maayaa*, in the next section.

2.2.1.3. Cosmic *Maayaa* and the Gross Body:

As we have mentioned earlier, the subtle elements are rudimentary and uncompounded and so by themselves they are unable to have to produce gross objects of the universe. The have to go through a process of quintuplication (*panchiikaranam*). It is a process in which the rudimentary subtle elements (*tanmaatras*) split up, intermingle and give way to the gross elements (*mahaabhuutas*). This process takes place in four stages. In the first stage

the five subtle elements remain in their pure and subtle forms. The second stage involves the division of each subtle element into two equal halves. In the third stage one half of each subtle element remains in tact, while the other half splits up into four equal parts. Thus, at this stage each subtle element divides itself into five parts, i.e., one half piece and four one-eighth bits. In the final stage one half of each subtle element combines with for different one-eighth bits, one each from the other four elements.[90] Sureshvaraachaarya in his *Panchiikarana-Vaarttikam*, comments on this process of quintuplication as follows:

> Each of the several [subtle] elements, Earth, etc. must be divided into two equal parts. One of these two parts should be further split into four equal parts. Now to one half of each element should be added one quarter of each of the other four halved elements. Thus, in Ether there will be five constituent parts. Half of it will be Ether and other half will consist of the four parts contributed together by all the other four elements. Thus, it is to be known in the case of the other four elements, like Air, etc. This process is the fivefold combination according to the wise.[91]

By this way of fivefold combinations the five subtle elements give rise to five gross elements (*mahaabhuutas*), i.e., the gross ether, the gross air, the gross fire, the gross water and the gross earth. Even though, after *panchiikaranam*, each gross element has got some part of the other elements, still it retains its name owing to the preponderance of its own part.[92] Since *mahaabhuutas* are combinations of all subtle elements, the former imbibes the qualities of the latter. As a result, the *mahaabhuutas* are not entirely different from *suukshmabhuutas*, as the latter is the cause of the former, just as a piece of cloth is not different from the threads that make the cloth.[93] Though similar to the subtle elements, the gross elements have greater portions of lower qualities of *rajas* and *tamas*. As a result of this factor in the composition of the gross elements, those that evolve earlier, which has more preponderance of *sattvagunaa* rather than the *rajas* and the *tamas* are simpler than later evolved ones. Therefore, the later evolved gross elements, besides possessing qualities exclusive to them, also possess qualities that belong to the preceding elements.[94] To quote on this point from *Panchiikarana-Vaarttikam*:

> [After the process of *panchiikaranam*] Ether has the quality of sound only. Air possesses the double qualities of sound and touch. Light or Fire is said to have qualities, sound, touch and form. Water has got four qualities, sound, touch, form and taste; whereas Earth is endowed with five qualities, viz., sound, touch, form, taste and smell.[95]

From the *mahaabhuutas* and their various compounds of integration and differentiation, there arises the cosmic system of fourteen worlds: three in the higher region, four in the middle region and seven in the lower region, viz., the *satyaloka*, the *jnaanaloka* and the *tapaloka* respectively. The *satyaloka* is formed out of the combinations of elements, in which *sattvagunaa* is dominant. In this *loka*, the souls enjoy an expansive life. In virtue of the rhythmic vibrations of life-current passing through, it is possible for the souls, in the *satyaloka*, to move progressively, enjoy better life and understand wider vision of truth. Those who live here are full of life; their knowledge is intuitive, delight serene and life easy.

The three planes of the higher region of the *satyaloka* are *satyam*, *tapas* and *jana*. *Jnaanaloka* evolves when the various combinations of elements are dominated by the *rajasgunaa*. It is an intermediate state that is characterized by coarse matter, life and mind. Though there is coarse matter in this state, there is order and coherence that life can grow and mind can function progressively. The life, here, is freer. There is clarity of vision, freedom and delight. The four planes of the middle region of *jnaanaloka* are *mahar*, *svar*, *bhuvar* and *bhur*. The *tapaloka* evolves when the combinations of elements, in which, *tamasgunaa* predominates. Due to the activity of the *tamas*, this state is full of darkness, and it is not conducive to the development of higher life and mental activity. In this sphere darkness, ignorance, contradictions, perplexities and confusions prevail. Since it is far removed from the center of life, one cannot have life and bliss in this state. Besides, as *tamas* dominates, the life force cannot make itself felt. The seven planes of the lower region of *tapaloka* are *atala*, *vitala*, *sutala*, *rasaatala*, *talaatala*, *mahaatala* and *paataala*.[96]

The last of these planes *paataala* is the world of phenomena, which contains four kinds of gross bodies and the food and drink appropriate to them. The four kinds of gross bodies are: those that are born of the womb like man and beasts; those that came out of egg like birds and reptiles; those that emerged from moisture like lice and mosquitoes; and those that grows from the soil like trees and creepers. All these gross bodies are perceived as one and the same result of the cosmic *maayaa*. But they can be perceived as separate entities like a tree in a forest.[97] In this manner cosmic *maayaa* brings about from the subtle elements, five gross elements by way of *panchiikaranam*, which, in turn, by various combinations manifests the multiplicity of the world in the realm of the gross body.

Having considered the activity of the cosmic *maayaa* in the macrocosm (*aadhidevaka*), we could focus out attention on the cosmic order set up by the activity of the cosmic *maayaa*.

2.2.1.4. The Cosmic Order:

The macrocosmic order set up by the cosmic *maayaa* consists of three cosmic orders of existence that belong to the three stages. The first cosmic stage of existence is waking consciousness (V*iraat*). The order that is presented to this stage of existence is the order of the cosmic gross body. It consists of all gross manifestations, which constitute the sensible world. It includes the five gross elements of ether, air, fire, water and earth. It also contains the threefold regions and the fourteen planes associated with the regions. Besides, this world of phenomena which contains four types of gross bodies and the food and drink appropriate to them, are part of this order. All these belong to the first state of cosmic waking consciousness. Thus, to this state belongs *Brahman* as limited by the cosmic gross body.[98] "The compounded elements [gross elements] go into the formation of the gross universe. . . . These gross elements . . . produce V*iraat*, i.e., the sum total of all bodies. This is the gross body of the embodied *Aatman*."[99]

The second cosmic stage of existence is the cosmic dream consciousness, in which, *Brahman* has the totality of the cosmic subtle body as its limiting adjunct. The consciousness, which identifies with the aggregate of the totality of subtle bodies as an individual whole, is called *Hirayanagarbha*. Thus, the object of this state of consciousness is

the five unconmponded elements (*apanchiikrita*), viz., ether, air, fire, water, and earth, which are endowed with the powers of knowledge, will and activity.[100] The ideal world of the subtle bodies is identified with *Hirayanagarbha*, which literally means `the golden embryo'. It is *Brahman* as effect (*kaarya*) envelopes itself in the `world egg' (*brahmaanda*) out of which develops according to the modes of realization, the whole manifestation of subtle existence. *Hirayanagarbha* is the primordial germ of the cosmic light, and is described as the `synthetic aggregate of life' (*jiiva-jnaana*)[101] *Hirayanagarbha* is also called *Suutraatmaa*, because it is the total vital force before manifestation that pervades the universe as the thread runs through the garland.[102] It is called the cosmic dream-state, because just as in a dream the physical phenomena of waking state are experienced in the form of mere ideas, so also in the cosmic level, the gross universe is transformed on the plane of *Hirayanagarbha* into a subtle universe. Thus, in the cosmic level the stage identified with *Hirayanagarbha* constitutes the intermediary state between the waking state and the state of deep sleep.[103]

The third cosmic existence brought about by the cosmic *maayaa* is the state of cosmic deep-sleep consciousness, in which *Brahman* has for its *upaadhi* the causal or bliss body.[104] In the state of deep-sleep, everything that is characteristic of waking state and the dream-state ceases to exist, like a banian tree in its seeds. In the deep-sleep one merges into the causal condition, viz., the state of ignorance. Thus, the causal body, which constitutes the order of cosmic deep-sleep consciousness, is neither made up of parts, nor is it not composed, nor even both composed and not composed. It is the undifferentiated, i.e., the unnamed and the unformed. It is neither existent nor non-existent. Neither is it both existent and non-existent. It is neither different from nor same as *Brahman*.[105] The personality, which appropriates the cosmic causal body in the state of deep-sleep consciousness, is *Iishvara* or *Akshara*, the great cause of the universe.[106] In this state *Iishvara*, through a very subtle function of ignorance enjoys bliss and happiness.[107]

Thus, the macrocosmic order set up by the cosmic *maayaa* involves three stages of existence and their respective order of existence, viz., the *Viraat* -- the gross body; *Hirayanagarbha* -- the subtle body and *Iishvara* -- the causal body. In superimposing this macrocosmic order the cosmic *maayaa* brings in the illusion of the plurality of the material world, the plurality of Gods and plurality of kingdoms of beings. In this manner, the cosmic *maayaa* is the source of our perception of multiplicity in the universe.

In this section, we have elaborated the cosmic *maayaa* and its effects. In the next section we could make an attempt to analyze the effects of individual *maayaa*, that brings about the microcosm (*adyaatmika*).

2.2.2. Effects of Individual *Maayaa*:

Individual *maayaa* (*avidhyaa*) makes one perceive his true self as *jiiva*, the empirical ego. The unit of existence conscious of its physical covering is called *jiiva*. It does not possess knowledge of its identity with *Brahman*. Thus, individual *maayaa* individuates *Aatman* as the empirical self (*jiiva*). Here, we spell out the consequences of the individual *maayaa* in

the level of causal body, subtle body and gross body of *jiiva*. Besides, we would also bring to light the three stages of individual existence and the orders that belong to these stages.

2.2.2.1. Individual *Maayaa* and the Causal Body:

The individual *maayaa* associated with *Aatman* constitutes the causal body or the bliss body of the *jiiva*, the empirical ego. The causal body comes about owing to the preponderance of *sattvagunaa*. Thus, the causal body of *jiiva* is composed of the *sattvic* aspect of the individual *maayaa* and it is the innermost aspect of *avidhyaa*.[108] The body at this state is said to be causal, as it is the see of the subtle and the gross bodies. Besides, this pure unattached potentiality of the body emerges from the *sattvagunaa* of the individual *maayaa*. Its nature is that the original ignorance from which springs the manifestation of the subtle and gross bodies. It is not the negation of the original consciousness of the *Aatman*, because without it, the causal body cannot exist. The veiling of *Aatman* by the causal body can be compared to the cloud covering the sun, though the cloud owes its being to the sun. The ignorance that constitutes the nature of the causal body cannot be strictly analyzed, defined or described. Often Vedaantins used contradictory statements in describing it. It is neither real nor unreal. Nor is it both real and unreal. It is neither one nor many. Not is it one and many. It is neither simple nor compounded. Nor is it both. The only positive description we can give of it is that the causal body ceases to be when true identity of *Brahman* and *Aatman* is achieved in true knowledge. This is because when one comes to be aware of the identity, the ignorance has disappeared. Thus, there is no need to explain the causal body, as there can be no coexistence of a clear awareness of *Aatman* and its ignorance. Thus, this ignorance is the causal body.[109] Thus, causal body involves the total absence of subtle and gross bodies. Therefore, causal body is "just ignorance and ignorance alone. . . . It is . . . total annihilation . . . emptiness . . . and nothingness."[110] But out of this nothingness comes everything, viz., one's emotions and thoughts, perceptions and actions. The causal body, the nothingness, is the seed body, out of which emerges the world of subtle and gross experiences of the *jiiva*.[111] Thus, the causal body is the innermost level of *jiiva*, where it enjoys bliss and happiness.[112] So the causal body of the *jiiva* is that body produced by the individual *maayaa*, by veiling the *Aatman*, which forms the basis of the subtle and gross bodies of the *jiiva*.

Having looked into the analysis of the activity of the individual *maayaa*, in relation to the causal body, we could like into the evolution of the individual subtle body by the activity of individual *maayaa*.

2.2.2.2. Individual *Maayaa* and the Subtle Body:

The subtle elements that were in an uncompounded (*apachiikrita*) state at the level of the individual causal body, by the activity of individual *maayaa*, in the process of *panchiikaranam*, evolves into subtle bodies (*linga-shariras*) giving various attributes and functions to *jiiva*.[113] The subtle bodies survive death and accompany *jiiva* beyond death. The component parts of the *linga-shariras* include a number of elements, viz., the five organs of perception (*jnaana indriyaas*), the five organs of actions (*karma indriyaas*), the vital forces (*praanas*) and the central organ (*antahkarana*). The central organ has four

faculties, viz., the mind (*manas*), the intellect (*buddhi*), the memory (*chitta*) and the I-sense (*ahankaara*).[114] We can briefly consider each of them in the following section.

The organs of perception (*jnaana indriyaas*) are out-lets through which the mind can know objects and the objects can give themselves to the mind. The five organs of perception are the ear, the skin, the eye, the tongue and the nose. Each of these senses has its corresponding perception, viz., sound, touch, sight, taste and smell respectively.[115] The actual organs of perception are not the gross instruments of the physical body, like the ear, the skin, the eye, the tongue and the nose, but the sense organs referred to, here, are the `sense-centers' located in the subtle body. There are the powers of perception, which are subtle and imperceptible unlike the physical instruments that are gross and perceptible. The eye many looking at an object, but the perception is not registered until the sense-center of seeing is contacted. The sense-centers of perception are located in the mind. Therefore, if the mind is absorbed in some deep thought far away from the object, the sense-center is not available for perception of that object, even though the object is physically present in front of the sense organ. The faculties of perception are said to be residing in the respective sense organs.[116] These sense organs are evolved separately in the consecutive order from the *sattvic* particles of the subtle elements (*suukshmabhuutas*), viz., ether, air, fire, water, and earth. In other words, ears are produced from the *sattva* particles of ether, skin is from those of air, eyes are from those of fire, the tongue is from those of water and nose is from those of earth.[117]

The five organs of action (*karma indriyaas*) are those with the help of which *jiiva*, a bodily and conscious organism can move about and perform activities. They include the organs of speech, the hands, the feet, the organs of evacuation and the organs of generation.[118] Just like the organs of perception, the organs of action are not gross instruments of the physical body like the tongue, the hands, the feet, the genital and evacuative organs, but `action-centers' located in the subtle body. These are powers of action that are subtle and imperceptible, unlike the physical instruments which are gross and perceptible. These powers of action are said to be residing in their respective organs of action. The centers of action are related to the intellect. Unlike the organs of perception, where the stimulus is received by the mind and then interpreted by the intellect, in the case of organs of action the intellect directly receives the stimulus and action emerges from the intellect. For example, when we see a red object, the mind receives the stimulus through the eye, and the intellect interprets its color and shape. But in the case of organs of action the intellect receives the stimulus and orders response to the stimulus, which are in turn carried out through the medium of mind. The *gunaa* operative in the organs of action is the *rajasgunaa*, which is fundamentally a quality of action. They have been produced separately from the *rajasic* particles of ether, air, fire, water and earth respectively.[119]

Subtle bodies also include an inner organ called the central organ (*antahkarana*). It is sometimes called the eleventh sense, as *antahkarana* is different from organs of perception and organs of action. Its main function is to make *jiiva* experience manifold things one by one in succession. It is capable of experiencing all types of sensations. *Antahkarana* is the inner organ of knowledge and that of volition. It is passive in that it gives knowledge, while it is impulsive in that it excites action. *Antahkarana*, as the faculty of reflection and of

desire, deliberation and will is called mind (*manas*). The mind has a number of modifications (*vritti*), relating to the intellectual and volitional states. The modifications of the intellectual state are doubt (*vicikitsa*), cognition (*dhi*), belief (*sraddha*) and retention (*dhiriti*). The modifications corresponding to the volitional state are desire (*kaama*), decision(*samkalpa*), deliberation (*vikalpa*), fear (*vi*), shame (*hri*), pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*dukha*).[120] These *vrittis* are classified into three classes depending on the predominance of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.[121] When *antahkarana* reflects the things truly, it is called intellect (*buddhi*). *Buddhi* is the faculty of right apperception or discriminative knowledge. While mind gives the *jiiva* knowledge, weighs reason for and against, and deliberates, the intellect helps *jiiva* to apprehend and perceive rightly.[122]

Other than the mind and the intellect *antahkarana* has two other faculties, viz., the faculty that remembers (*chitta*) and the faculty of retention that preserves the sense of individuality or the `I-sense' (*ahamkaara*), which are associated with the mind and the intellect. While *chitta* makes *jiiva* remember by way of recollection, *ahamkaara* makes *jiiva* experience itself as the `I' and say `I exist' (*asmi*).[123] All these four faculties of the central organ are in fact its different modifications (*antahkarana-vritti*). According to Vedaantins, when an organ perceives an object the mind transforms itself into the object. For example, when the eyes see a pot, the mind moves out through the eye and takes the form of the pot. In the same way the various modifications of *antahkarana* give way to these fourfold faculties. When *antahkarana* is absolutely certain as to the fact of the existence of this object as a pot, it is intellect (*buddhi*). In the same way when *antahkarana* remembers an object a pot, it is called *chitta*. When *antahkarana* establishes the relationship of `I' or `mine' with an object and makes the *jiiva* say `I know the object', `I am happy' or `Mine is happiness', it is known as *ahamkaara*.[124] Sri Srueshvarachaarya in his *Panchiikarana-Vaarttikam* sums up the threefold senses that belong to the realm of the subtle bodies, viz., the organs of perception, the organs of action and the central organ as follows:

> The sense organs of perception are five, viz., the organs of hearing, touch, seeing, smell and taste. The organs of action, too, are five, namely, that of speech, the hands, the feet and the organs of excretion and generation. There are four internal organs, namely, the mind, the intellect, the ego and the apparatus of contemplation. The mind is that which considers the pros and corns of a subject, and the intellect is that faculty which determines. Likewise, the principle of ego is said to be of the nature of sense of ownership, and *chitta* or memory is that factor which remembers.[125]

Besides the threefold organs of perception, action and intellection, there is a fourth element in the subtle bodies called the vital force (*praana*). It is the individual vivifying principle in *jiiva*. It consists of all the vital currents that support and preserve the organic existence of *jiiva*. *Praana* "preserves the physical frames in existence, regulates the entire physiological process and make the performance of higher functions possible in the physical frame."[126] It is present in every part of the physical body and makes each part alive and working. There are five types of *praana*, each of which guides different life system and their functions. *Praana* or *mukhya praana* regulates respiratory system. It also controls the fivefold perceptions of seeing, hearing smelling, tasting and touching. Thus the *mukhya praana* is

the faculty of perception. *Apaana* is the faculty of excretion. It controls the proper functioning of the excretionary system in the human body, such as, urine, perspiration and others. *Samaana* is the faculty of digestion, which digests food that is received by the body. *Vyaana* is the faculty of circulation, which distributes the digested food to different parts of the body. *Udaana* is the faculty of thought absorption that takes in fresh knowledge and guides the higher organs such as mind, intellect and others.[127] The combinations of the active *rajasic* particles of ether, air, fire, water and earth produce the five vital forces.[128] The *praanas* enumerated above are the subtle *praanas* that are imperceptible and intangible. They are different from the gross *praanas* that are tangible physiological activities associated with the physical body. Vital forces are connecting link between the subtle and the gross body. That is why, when a person is mentally upset (which is a condition of the subtle body), it brings about physiological illness, which belongs to the realm of the gross bodies. The subtle *praanas* belong to the realm of subtle bodies.[129]

Now that we have looked into the whole range of the activities of the individual *maayaa*, in the level of the subtle bodies, we could move on to speak of the effects of the individual *maayaa* in the realm of the gross bodies, in the next section.

2.2.2.3. Individual *Maayaa* and the Gross Body:

By the activity of the individual *maayaa* in the level of the gross bodies *jiiva* begins to be fully associated with what is external and peripheral. *Jiiva* totally oblivious to its true nature as the *Aatman* and identifies itself with the body. Thus, *jiiva* is boundto good or bad actions, which determine its existence in the higher or lower regions. It enjoys the physical and gross things, as it has a body, which with its appetites originates out of the *mahaabhuutas* and their various combinations. Because of the physical body and its appetites, *jiiva* experiences hunger, thirst, sleep, anger and all such states.[130] The physical body which *jiiva* possesses is the fleshy covering, which it casts off at its death.[131]

The individual *maayaa* makes the *jiiva* perceive gross objects, viz., sound, touch, color, taste and smell respectively, through the gross physical senses such as the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. These physical instruments of perception belong to the level of the gross body, as they are tangible and perceptible. *Jiiva* guided by individual *maayaa* performs gross functions of speech, acceptance, waking, excretion and enjoyment respectively through the use of the gross instruments of the physical body, such as organs of speech, the hands, the feet, the organs of evacuation and generation. Besides, *jiiva* experiences in the gross level uncertainty, determination, its own individual and empirical personality and remembrance, respectively by the four inner organs, viz., themind, the intellect, the faculty of I-sense and the faculty of remembrance.[132] The *jiiva* experiences the activity of the five gross *praanas* in his physiological activities of the physical body. It is because of the entanglement of the subtle bodies with the gross bodies, the mind craves for and infatuated by the gross sense objects of the world.[133] Thus, due to the activity of the individual *maayaa* in the gross level, *jiiva* gets totally grossified and becomes one among many in the phenomenal world.

2.2.2.4. Individual *Maayaa* and the Sheaths of *Aatman*:

Because of the activity of the individual *maayaa* on *jiiva*, it experiences itself as possessing five material layers or sheaths (*koshas*). By identifying itself with these layers of its personality, the *jiiva* forgets its true nature as *Aatman* as the sheaths form five layers that cover the reality of *Aatman*. The more the *jiiva* identifies itself with these sheaths, the more it distances itself from *Aatman*, thereby forgetting its true identity with the ultimate reality. Briefly we could clarify each these sheaths.

The sheath of the body (*annamaayaakosha*), the outermost sheath, is the covering of the coarse body that is purely flesh. It is a dense cover. The gross organs of perception, the gross organs of action, the gross vital forces and the activities of the inner organs conditioned by the gross physical experience fall within this sheath. It is also called the food sheath, as this sheath is caused and maintained by food. Besides, this sheath also ends up as food. The sheath of the vital air (*praanamaayaakosha*) is the sheath of vital force. It is that which supports the preservation of the organic existence of a body. It includes faculties of perception, excretion, digestion, circulation and thought absorption. All these functions performed by this sheath are basically physiological. It is the source of strength and vitality of an organism. As a person gets older the *praanas* lose their vitality and so he is not able to perform these biological functions normally. When *praanas* function properly the physical body is healthy. The sheath of vital air is subtler than the physical sheath and the former controls the latter. The mental sheath (*manomaayaakosha*) consists of functions that are associated with the mind, such as, passions, emotions, feelings, impulses and likes and dislikes. Mental sheath controls the vital air sheath and the body sheath. That is why any disturbance of the mind can affect body and its functions. The intelligent sheath (*vijnaanamaayaakosha*) takes care of intellectual functions, such as, thinking, reflecting, discriminating, judging and other similar functions. It directs the above three sheaths. The bliss sheath (*aanandamaayaakosha*) is the innermost sheath of *jiiva* in the state of *avidhyaa*, where it experiences total absence of activity belonging to the level of the subtle and the gross bodies. Thus, in this sheath all the tendencies (*vaasanaas*) of the *gunaas* are unmanifest.[134] The five sheaths enumerated above, in fact, refer to the three levels of the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. The *annamaayaakosha* belongs to the level of the gross body. The *praanamaayaakosha*, the *manomaayaakosha* and the *vijnaanamaayaakosha* constitute the subtle body. Of these three the first is endowed with the power of knowledge and so is the agent; the second is endowed with the will power and so is the instrument and the third is endowed with activity and therefore, it is the product. In other words, intellect due to its closeness to *Aatman*, functions as the agency of knowledge, which uses the mind as an instrument of cognition, and which, in turn, is expressed in the activity of the different *praanas* that constitute the *praanamaayaakosha*.[135] *Aanandamaayaakosha* refers to the causal body, wherein the latent energy of the person dwells. When these hidden materials of the causal body express themselves in thoughts and feelings, we have the subtle body and when the same express in perceptions, we have the gross body. To the extent a person would open himself to the directions of the causal body, to that extent his life would richer, because the bliss sheath, though a state of ignorance, is closest to the absolute *Aatman*.[136]

All these *koshas* serve as *upaadhis* that individuate *jiiva*, making it forget its true nature and condition. Shankara notes that the *jiiva* is to be considered as a mere appearance of the

highest self, like the reflection of the sun on water. It is neither directly the highest self, nor a different thing. Just as, when one reflected image of the sun trembles another reflected image does not on that account tremble also; so when one soul is connected with actions and results of actions, another soul on that account is not connected likewise. Thus, *jiiva* appears to be numerous due to ignorance, yet one soul's actions do not affect the other.[137] In consequence the *jiiva* is not aware of its divine reality and becomes the worshipper of *Iishvara*, the Lord of *maayaa*. In fact, *jiiva* and *Iishvara* are the result of *maayaa* and disappears as true knowledge is attained.

Having looked into the activity of the individual *maayaa* in the level of causal, subtle and gross bodies and in the level of *koshas*, we could go on to speak of the microcosmic order established by the individual *maayaa*, in the next section.

2.2.2.5. The Individual Order:

By the activity of the individual *maayaa* there comes about the order of the individual, where *jiiva* experiences itself in different levels of existence. The individual order includes the *jiiva's* three stages of consciousness and the respective order of existence associated with each of these states. The first state of individual existence is the individual waking consciousness (*Vishva*). In this state *jiiva* is characterized by the individual gross body.[138] In this state, the individual soul experiences the world of external objects through the senses and the mind. Thus, *jiiva* as the waker experiences the waking world of things and objects. These are experienced as solid, rigid, real, set in their laws and rules. The perpetual world becomes *jiiva's* field of knowledge and enjoyment. The objects are perceived, known and enjoyed as real existing things outside the mind. The world is also perceived by *jiiva* as a series of states and it is understood in relation to *jiiva* itself as the subject, i.e., as the `knowing I'. As a result, one experiences oneself as the `I' of all his experiences. He says about himself as `I see', `I hear', `I am happy', `I am a child', `I am old' and many similar statements. Thus, the `I' pervades the entire realm of his waking state. The cognitive process, in the state of waking consciousness also involves the three aspects of the instrumental (*pramaana*), the objective (*premeya*) and the consequent (*phala*). Thus, knowledge in this state is conditioned by the subject-object modality.[139] Thus, in the state of *Vishva* the individual *maayaa* individuates *jiiva* in relation to the gross body and makes it an entity among the multiplicity of entities in the phenomenal world.

The second state brought about by the individual *maayaa* is the state of individual dream consciousness (*Taijasa*), which has subtle body as its object. "Dream is a state conditioned by the inactivity of the senses, the potency of impressions of waking state and the functioning of consciousness, in the role of both subject and object. The ego, which has the sense of ownership in relation to both the dream-state and the subtle body is called *Taijasa*."[140] In this state, *jiiva* is conscious of what is within and enjoys subtle objects. In *Taijasa* consciousness is fully withdrawn from external objects and rests on the impressions (*vaasanaas*) of the waking state that remains within the mind. Thus, the mind (*manas*) and memory (*chitta*) aspects of the central organ (*antahkarana*) play a great role in the dream-state. The external senses are fully at rest in *Taijasa*. Besides, in the dream-state there is no body consciousness and no time-space restrictions as in the waking state.

Even though the contents of dreams emerge from the *vaasanaas* of the waking state, they are not mere literal reproductions of the waking state experiences. Though most of the dream contents originate from the experiences of waking state, they are modified by the mind's capacity for creativity and constructive imagination (*kalpana*). In explaining the origin of dreams the Advaitins hold that dreams are the result of the activity (*karma*) of the mind, which is conditioned by desire (*kaama*) based on ignorance. Shankara is of the opinion that *jiiva* after the cessation of the senses in sleep, creates a subtle body of desires that shapes the dreams according to its *buddhi*. The mind creates dreams for the purpose of causing joy or fear to the dreamer in accordance with his good or bad deeds. Thus, though the content of dreams is traces left from the waking state, it flows with freedom and proper sequence, by the activity of the mind. For the *jiiva* that dreams, the dream world is as real as it experiences the reality of waking state when it is awake.[141] In this manner due to the activity of the individual *maayaa* the *jiiva* experiences and enjoys subtle objects in the state of *Taijasa*.

The third state of *jiiva* caused by the individual *maayaa* is the individual deep-sleep consciousness (*praajna*). *Jiiva* at this state is characteristic of the bliss or causal body. In this state *jiiva* enjoys bless. Behind this bliss body exists the innermost of all beings, *Brahman*. Thus, the state of deep-sleep in some way points to the ultimate experience of *Brahman*, as in it the duality that is characteristic of *Vishva* and *Taijasa* states is absent. In it neither there is a subject that knows, nor is there an object to be known. It is a state of undifferentiated or unified consciousness (*prajnaanaghana*) in which the contents of the waking and dream states come together. In it the limitations of *avidhyaa* and the constitutive elements of waking and dream states, such as, space, time, causality and *karmic* activity are in the latent or potential condition. But it is not an unconscious state, in which there comes about a loss of consciousness.[142] Advaitins give two reasons to justify this truth. Firstly, in the state of deep-sleep the deep-sleeper experiences the greatest inner serenity (*samprasaada*) and bliss (*aananda*), that brings greater joy than one feels in the waking and dream states. Besides, deep-sleep is an experience beyond all sufferings and fear, free from grief and desire. It is an experience of unparalleled well being, of harmony and integration.[143] Secondly, when *jiiva* awakes from deep-sleep, it is fully aware of the fact that it had a good sleep and it exclaims that `I slept soundly and that I did not know anything'.[144] Thus, from the fact that *jiiva* experiences bliss and the highest serenity and that it has the self-consciousness of the fact of having a good and sound sleep, Vedaantins conclude that the state of deep-sleep is not an unconscious state, but a state of depth experience. But it is different from the state of self-realization, as the former is a state conditioned by ignorance, while the latter is an unconditioned state.[145]

In this manner the individual *maayaa* sets the individual order, in which the *jiiva* experiences the states of *Vishva*, *Taijasa* and *Praajna* in relation to the gross, the subtle and the causal bodies.

2.2.3. Macrocosmic-Microcosmic Orders Veil *Brahman*:

We have analyzed the consequences of ignorance by looking into the effects of cosmic and individual *maayaa* in the macrocosm and the microcosm respectively, in the last two

sections. In this section, we could move on to see the relationship between the cosmic and the individual orders of existence and how they veil *Brahman*, identical with *Aatman*, by superimposing the cosmic and individual orders on *Brahman*.

Though, our analysis of the consequences of ignorance in the last section, brought to light, that the phenomenal world is a fact of our experience, still it is a superimposition of the cosmic and individual *maayaa* on *Brahman*, the absolute reality that is identical with *Aatman*. Our experience of this superimposed world flows as three streams of consciousness, each having its own object of experience. The states are the waking state, the dream-state and the state of deep-sleep, and the objects are the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body respectively. The manifestations of the absolute *Brahman* in and through the three states and by way of three bodies is not a real transformation of *Brahman*, but only an imaginary attribution (*adhyaasa*) or an apparent transformation (*vivartha*). Just as the snake is the *vivartha* of the rope in the rope-snake illustration, so also the experience of the world in these threefold states and threefold bodies is a *vivartha* of *Brahman*.[146]

In the microcosmic level, by the activity of individual *maayaa*, the absolute *Aatman* is firstly manifested as embodied in the gross body and experiencing the state of waking consciousness. The self, seen as embodied and living the life of the waker is called *Vishva*. The self is viewed as possessing subtle body and enjoying the subtle experiences of the dream world, it is known as the state of *Taijasa*. When the self is perceived as resting in the bliss of the causal body, in the state of deep-sleep, it is the *Praajna*. Thus, *avidhyaa* superimposes on *Aatman*, the empirical ego, *jiiva*, in its threefold personalities as the waker, the dreamer and the deep sleeper. Advaitins make use of two theories to do the de-superimposition. The first is the theory of reflection by which they try to show *jiiva* as a reflection of the *Aatman*, while the second theory is the theory of apparent limitation, by which they show that *jiiva* separated from *Aatman* by limiting adjuncts (*upaadhis*) superimposed by the individual *maayaa*.[147]

In the macrocosmic level the cosmic *maayaa* superimposes the totality of the phenomenal world on *Brahman* in the waking consciousness, the cosmic dream consciousness and the cosmic deep-sleep consciousness, having the objects of the total gross body, the total subtle body and the total causal body respectively. In relation to the totality of the gross universe as manifested in the cosmic waking consciousness, *Brahman*, the cosmic spirit is called *Viraat*. Manifested as embodied in the totality of the subtle bodies in the cosmic dream consciousness, *Brahman* is *Hirayanagarbha* or *Suutraatmaa*. In the primordial realm of cosmic deep-sleep consciousness, having for its object the totality of the causal bodies, when *Brahman's* self-concealment takes place, there emerges *Iishvara*. This state is also called *Akshara*. Thus, *Brahman* is superimposed in the cosmic level as *Viraat*, *Hirayanagarpha* and *Iishvara*.[148]

Thus, the totality of the gross, the subtle and causal worlds, both in the microcosmic and the macrocosmic levels make up the appearance of this vast universe. But, in essence, the collective manifestations of *Brahman*, i.e., *Viraat*, *Hirayanagarbha* and *Iishvara*, and the individual manifestations of *Brahman*, viz., *Vishva*, *Taijasa* and *Praanja* are one and the

same in their respective stages of consciousness. Advaitins explain this point, "Just as different forests each containing a particular species of trees taken together constitute a vast forest; or a number of lakes of various dimensions make the vast expanse of water, viz., the sea or the ocean; so also the totality of gross, subtle and causal worlds make up a vast universe."[149] This statement clearly indicates that the microcosmic and the macrocosmic manifestations in the level of the gross bodies, viz., *Vishva* and *Viraat*, in the level of subtle bodies, viz., *Taijasa* and *Hirayanagarbha*, in the level of the causal bodies, viz., *Praajna* and *Iishvara* are one and the same. The coming together of the individuals of the gross, subtle, and causal nature would make the aggregates of their respective nature. *Panchiikarana-Vaarttikam* affirms this point as follows:

> This *Vishva* (individual consciousness identifying Itself with the waking state and the gross body) must be looked upon as identical with *Viraat* (the macrocosmic consciousness) so that duality may be sublated. . . . Dream is the state conditioned by the inactivity of senses, the potency of waking state and the functioning of consciousness in the role of both the subject and the object. The ego, which has the sense of ownership in relation to both (the dream and the subtle body), is called *Taijasa*. . . . The wise one should look upon this *Taijasa* as identified with *Hirayanagarbha*, the subtle objective totality. . . . The personality which appropriates these two (the deep-sleep state and the causal body is described as *Praajna*. One should look upon this *Praajna* as one or identical with the great cause of the universe, *Iishvara*.[150]

Thus, we do find an essential unity between the microcosmic and macrocosmic pairs, viz., *Vishva--Viraat*, *Taijasa--Hirayanagarbha* and *Praajna--Iishvara*.

But all these six states are appearances superimposed by *maayaa* on *Brahman* and in no way represent the ultimate reality, which is pure consciousness. "The ultimate Reality", affirms Sureshvaraachaarya, "which is of the nature of pure consciousness, though one, appears through illusion as the multitude of *Vishva*, *Taijasa*, *Praajna*, *Viraat*, *Suura* [*Hirayanagarbha*] and *Akshara* [*Iishvara*] forms."[151] Thus, these six states are microcosmic and macrocosmic superimposition on *Brahman* by the activity of cosmic and individual *maayaa*. These appearances in no way mar the non-duality of the absolute self,[152] which is eternal and immutable. "In reality Truth is only One and That through illusion appears as many."[153] Since the cosmic and individual orders of existence are basically appearances, they cannot give one the true experience of *Brahman*. In fact the final state of self-realization, which is also referred to in the Upanishads the *Tuuriiya,*[154] is beyond these three cosmic and three individual states of ignorance. To attain this final state of *Brahmaanubhava* the seeker must transcend all these states of ignorance superimposed by *Maayaa*.

The cosmic *maayaa* and *avidhyaa* individualize *Brahman* as *Iishvara* and *jiiva*, besides giving the illusion of the plurality of existence. To the question "why must there be an emergence of the infinite process of becoming from *Brahman* through *maayaa*?" often the answer given is that it is the *lila* of *Brahman*. The term `*liila*' means a sport or a playful activity. *Liila* lies in ignorance and it can never reveal the true nature of reality. We cannot

ascribe any specific reason why the *liila* of *Brahman* takes place, except saying that it is an appearance suitable to the capacity and understanding of the one to whom it does appear. *Liila*, therefore, is real to the one whom it appears, but it does not do anything to *Brahman*, who sportily assumes the appearances.[155] In other words, *liila* is a self-imposed limitation on the part of *Brahman*, which does not impair the integrity of the absolute, but satisfies our volitional and emotional nature, which makes us conceive the absolute as a personal existence that can fill our pragmatic need for love and devotion.[156]

2.3. CHARACTERISTICS OF IGNORANCE:

In the preceding sections of this chapter, we looked into the nature, cause and consequences of ignorance. Now, in order to clarify this notion further, we could briefly, take up the issue of its characteristics. According to Shankara, the state of ignorance has four significant characteristics, viz., it involves subject-object distinction, it is mediate and indirect, it is knowable by *pramaanas* (means of knowledge) and it is a caused knowledge. In the following section, we could analyze these characteristics in detail.

2.3.1. Subject-Object Distinction:

The state of ignorance is marked by the empirical experience of *jiiva*, the empirical ego. Empirical experience, as we well know, is the everyday human experience, which involves the subject-object duality. For example, in perceiving an object such as a table or a book the perceptual knowledge comes about as a result of someone seeing or touching the table or the book in question. Thus, empirical experience always involves the distinction between `the experiencer' and `the experienced', `the knower' and `the known'. In his introduction to Shankara's *Aatmabhooda*, Swami Nihilananda writes about empirical experience as follows:

> Empirical experience involves the distinction between the `seer' (*drig*) and the `seen' (*drysa*), the subject (*vishayi*) and the object (*vishaya*), the ego (*aham*) and the non-ego (*idem*). The seer is the perceiver, identical with the subject and the ego and is of the nature of consciousness and intelligence. The seen is the thing perceived, identical with the object and non-ego, and is insentient by nature. Therefore, the seer and the seen, the subject and the object, the ego and the non-ego are mutually opposed and must never be identified with each other.[157]

Both the subject and the object are essential to and inseparable from empirical experience. Without one of them, an empirical experience is not possible. Though an object might exist outside, there is no actual empirical experience unless there is a knower of the particular object. "An object may exist independently of a knower; and the knower become self-conscious while revealing something which may be an external object or an internal idea."[158] Thus, the basic element that characterizes every empirical experience is the presence of duality of the subject and the object.

All means of empirical knowledge (*pramaanas*) presuppose the subject-object distinction and operate in the realm of duality. Even scriptural knowledge is empirical in the sense that it is intended for an agent who is able to know. For Shankara says: "The meditation taught in the Vedaanta texts, whose aim is the realization of the self, represented by the Upanishads, is possible only if the self is the agent."[159] Thus without a subject or a knower, the purpose of the scripture cannot be realized. In other words, if there is no one to know what is revealed in the scriptures, scriptural knowledge is not possible. But, though scriptural testimony is empirical, confined to the realm of phenomena and involves duality, it is superior to other means of knowledge since scripture reveals the highest reality and helps one to remove ignorance.[160]

All these distinctions and differences including subject-object distinction of our experience in the world fall under three categories, viz., *sajatiiya*, *vijatiiya* and *swagatha*. *Sajatiiya* is the difference existing in the same species of a genus. Two men of different nations or two men of different castes would be examples of this type of distinction. In *vijatiiya* the difference is between two species of the same genus. The difference between a horse and a cow would be an illustration of the second category of differences. *Swagatha* refers to the difference in the various aspects of a single entity. The differences between the head, feet, eyes and other limps in a man, would be an example of *swagatha*. In the state of ignorance, in man's perception of the world, he as a subject is related to all these objects that are distinct from him and which he experiences as the object of his perception.[161]

2.3.2. Mediate and Indirect Knowledge:

Empirical knowledge, which is characteristic of *jiiva* in the state of ignorance, is obtained by the activity of the senses, the mind and the intellect, in the actual presence of the object sensed and understood. In other word, when one comes into contact with an object, with the help of the external senses and understood with the help of the internal faculties of knowing, the knowledge of that object is obtained. But, if it happens that one lacks the senses and other faculties of knowing, the empirical knowledge of objects is not possible. Therefore, the media like senses, mind and intellect are equally essential to empirical experience, as are the subject and the object. Thus, an individual becomes a knower, just because the physical, mental and intellectual faculties mediate knowledge.[162]

Since empirical knowledge is attained by means of eternal and internal media, such as, senses, mind and intellect, it is mediate and indirect knowledge. In other words, it is a representative knowledge. One comes to know the objects not directly and immediately, but the object is known as the senses, mind and intellect represent it. Thus, it is with the help of the representative idea of the object that the object is known. Empirical knowledge, therefore, is different from direct and immediate knowledge. Here one experiences knowledge about a reality intuitively and directly, without the help of any medium of knowledge. In such knowledge the activities of the senses, the mind and the intellect are suspended, and one is open to the knowledge without any mediation of these external and internal faculties of knowing. On the other hand, as empirical knowledge fundamentally and essentially is dependent on physical and mental faculties of knowledge, it is basically mediate and indirect knowledge.[163]

Since, in the state of ignorance, knowledge is arrived at with the help of physical and mental faculties of knowledge, it can be described in human language. The ability of human media of knowledge and communication to describe and express what things are, comes from the fact that the world of objects has quality (*gunaa*), function(*kriya*), name (*nama*), qualification (*vishesha*) and relationship (*sambandha*). Since the objects of the world has these qualities and that these qualities can be observed, grasped and expressed through the media of knowledge, positive linguistic description of this world is possible. In an immediate knowledge, where *Brahman* is intuitively grasped, a positive linguistic expression would be impossible, as this knowledge is beyond the level of human knowledge. Besides, *Brahman*-knowledge is without qualities, the language of negation is used to talk about it. But, since empirical knowledge is about the characteristics of terrestrial objects, a positive linguistic expression of it is possible.[164]

2.3.2. Knowledge Knowable by *Pramaanas*:

Empirical knowledge, which belongs to *jiiva* in the state of ignorance, is known by various means of knowledge (*pramaanas*). Vedaanta speaks of six means of knowledge, which can be categorized into two groups, based on the subject matter each group is dealing with. The first group attempts to give knowledge of the empirical realities, while the second group is the means of knowledge of transcendental reality. The former includes the first five *pramaanas*, viz., perception (*pratyaksha*), inference (*anumaana*), comparison(*upamaana*), supposition (*arthaapatti*) and non-perception (*anupalabdhi*). The latter group consists of the last *pramaana*, viz., verbal testimony (*sabda*).[165] We could give a brief consideration of each of these means of knowledge.

Perception is an important means of knowledge. Its value consists in presenting to our consciousness, the manifold reality of this world, even though it does not prove their validity. According to Vedaantic thinkers, perception gives us the knowledge of reality, but fails to explain the difference. In other words, perception has the cognitive element as it gives information about the mere existence of realities, but it does not have the re-cognitive element, as it does not have characteristics, such as, assimilation and clarification of difference. It can be held as a source of valid knowledge, if it is not contradicted by subsequent experience or by knowledge attained by any other *pramaanas*. The process of perception takes place in this manner. The mind comes in contact with the senses, the senses with the object and the mind with the consciousness immanent in it. As the result of these contacts, the mind is modified in the form of the object, which, in turn, leads to an identity between the perceiving-consciousness and object-consciousness. The modification of the mind (*vritti*), in taking the form of the object, destroys ignorance and the object is revealed to the perceiving-consciousness. Thus, the perception involves the conformity of the mental order to the given objective order.[166]

Inference is a process of acquiring knowledge of a particular thing, with the help of a mark it possesses, even though there is not way of directly perceiving it. Vedaantins basically follow the Nyaaya doctrine of inference, with some minor modifications. In inference, the invariable concomitance (*vyaapti*) between the middle term (*heetu*) and the major term (*saadhya*) is established by frequent experience. For example, the concomitance of the fire

and the smoke is presumed from their existing in the kitchen. *Vyaapti*, the concomitant relationship between *heetu* and *saadhya*, is not an inference, but a permanent impression (*samskara*) left upon the consciousness, by the observation of positive instances and the non-observation of negative instances. Once *vyaapti* is established, then one can proceed to make an inference by linking the *heetu* and the minor term. For example, by linking smoke to fire in *vyaapti*, one can conclude that there is fire in the mountain, if one finds smoke there. In order to present the inference on has made in this manner to others, a five-member syllogism is proposed. They are the following:

There is fire in the mountain.

Because there is smoke in the mountain.

Wherever there is smoke, there is fire, as in the kitchen.

This mountain has smoke.

Therefore, it has fire.

The first premise of the syllogism states the conclusion to be proved. The second gives the reason (*heetu*), while the third is the major premise, in which we have an illustration of the concomitance of the *heetu* and *saadhya*. The fourth premise links the middle term and the minor term. The fifth premise re-states the conclusion.[167]

Comparison, as a *pramaana*, is based on similarity (*sadrisya*) between two objects. In it, a particular thing is felt to be like another thing. For example, a *gavaya* is experienced as an animal similar to a cow. The cause of such an experience is the functional activity of consciousness of similarity between the things compared. *Upamaana* is not perception, as the similarity experienced is not presented to the senses, but rather directly given to the perceiving consciousness. Neither is it a remembrance or a re-cognition as the similarity experienced is not what we had already known, forgotten and now remember but rather, the similarity presented to the consciousness as something completely new. Comparison is also not an inference, for the knowledge of similarity is attained by direct experience and not inferred through the function of the *vyaapti*.[168]

Supposition consists in presuming the cause of thing from its effect. Thus presumption is based on a negative mark (*vyatireeki linga*). The usual example given to illustrate *arthaapatti* is `the earth differs from other elements, because of its smell'. Supposition is not an inference, but an implication or a hypothesis. It is the supposition of the cause. In other words, *arthaapatti* suggests the cause form the given effect. For example, when one is told that `Devadatta is not home', one presumes that he must be out of station. In other words, the fact that Davedatta not at home is caused by his being out of station. This presumption of the cause of Devadatta's absence from home is based on the *pramaana* called *arthaapatti*.[169]

Non-perception is the source of knowledge of non-existence (*abhaava*). For Vedaantins, non-existence is not a mere negation of being, but it is something that has a real existence and it is perceived by the *pramaana* called *anupalabdhi*. Non-existence is an existence, which is identified with its locus, but in it we do not experience any objects. In other words, *abhaava* implies the existence of a locus without any object. Though, the object of *abhaava* is absent, it is capable of being perceived as absent. Therefore, non-existence has a reality. In order to apprehend the nature of non-existence we require a specific *pramaana*, which would give us the knowledge, not only of the locus of non-existence, but also of the absence of the object. That means of knowledge that gives us knowledge of non-existence is non-perception. It helps us to experience the absence directly in relation to its locus.[170]

Other than these five means of knowledge, Vedaantins accept verbal testimony (*sabda*) as a valid source of knowledge. They distinguish five stages in the entire process of verbal cognition. When a word, which is a symbol of thought, is uttered, the first thing involved is the sensation of sound. Then follows the perception or interpretation of the sensation. At the third stage, the perceiver of the sensation must make an attempt to recognize the meaning signified by each word. At the fourth stage, there involves the constructive apprehension of the different independent meanings presented by different words, in case what was spoken involved more than one word. Finally, the hearer of the word must believe in the truth of the meaning of the word or the sentence uttered. Only when all these five stages are gone through, we can strictly speak of knowledge by testimony.[171]

According to the Advaitins there are two kinds verbal testimony (*sabda*), based on the source of *sabda*. Verbal testimony is personal, it the source of information is a person, whereas it is impersonal if the information is based on the authority of the *Sruti*. The former cannot be accepted unconditionally, because it is possible that the person, the source of authority, can either deliberately misrepresent truth, or can present the falsity as truth in good faith. The latter can be accepted unconditionally, as it is based on the authority of the scriptures. It is eternal. The verbal testimony is understood in relation to its meaning (*artha*). The word and its meaning are inseparably related to things, as they directly refer to things and express things. The denotative potency of the *sabda* is co-eternal with itself. All words are endowed with an inherent denotative potency form eternity. Therefore, the relationship between language and thought, words and things are *a priori*, and the system of names is not created, but manifested from eternity. Thus, according to Vedaantins, *sabda*, as the scriptural testimony has an eternal dimension and it can be accepted as a true means of knowledge unconditionally.[172]

According to Advaitins, all these means of knowledge are valid, as they give us knowledge of this phenomenal world, i.e., the state of ignorance. But, we cannot hold them as absolute, because their scope is limited to the empirical order. When considered in relation to the state of self-realization, their reality and the truth they give cease to exist. As a result, we cannot make use of them in the transcendental order. This does not mean that these means of knowledge are useless. They are useful, valid and necessary as long as we are under the sway of empirical consciousness or *jiiva* existence.[173]

2.3.4. Caused Knowledge:

An empirical experience, which *jiiva* possesses in the state of ignorance, is transient and of a passing nature. It takes place in time. Thus, empirical experience has a beginning. When an object is presented to the individual consciousness through the media of senses and grasped by the intellect one begins to have an empirical knowledge. Likewise, if the subject or the object of that particular experience exists no longer, then the empirical knowledge no longer exists. Experience of a particular person does not exist when that person is dead or if the object of experience is destroyed. Thus, empirical knowledge is a caused knowledge. Since it is a caused knowledge, the individual can gain more of it when he works for its attainment. By study, hard work, listening to others who know better and research, empirical knowledge can be attained and developed. Again, one can attain this type of knowledge by use of many modern techniques and technologies. For example, we can achieve the knowledge of a language and its best use by using new techniques of language learning and the use of modern technological inventions, such as a computer, audio-systems and other similar instruments. Therefore, the attainment of empirical knowledge depends on each individual, especially in the effort he makes and the facilities available to him.

NOTES

1. *VSS*, no. 34, p. 23.

2. Cf. F. Max Mueller, trans., "Svetaasvatra Upanishad", SBE, Vol. 15, Part II, IV, 21 (Hereafter: *SU*).

3. Cf. *CU*, VII, vii, 1.

4. Cf. *AU*, V, iii.

5. Cf. *VSS*, no. 34, pp. 23-24.

6. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.

7. *BSB*, I, i, p. 2.

8. Cf. Eliot Deutsch, p. 33.

9. T.M.P. Mahadevan, p. 1.

10. Cf. Eliot Deutsch, p. 34.

11. Cf. T.M.P. Mahadevan, pp. 1-2.

12. Cf. *BSB*, I, i, p. 2.

13. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3. Cf. Also *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 42.

14. Cf. *BSB*, I, i, p. 3

15. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 322.

16. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 322-323.

17. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 323-324.

18. PI, 1.13.

19. Cf. *BSB*, I, i, p. 3.

20. Cf. *Ibid.*

21. Cf. *Ibid.*

22. Cf. *VC*, pp. 18-21.

23. Cf. *Ibid.*

24. *BSB*, I, i, pp. 5-6.

25. "*Maayaa* is superimposition.". "*Maayaa* causes superimposition." Both of these statements are valid from the perspective of Advaita Vedaanta, as in empirical matters, it accepts the doctrine of *satkaaryavaada*, which says that the cause and the effect are one and the same in substance. This is because they hold that the effect pre-exists in the cause before it is produced. Advaita Vedaantins use the terms, such as, *maayaa* (cosmic ignorance), *avidhyaa* (individual ignorance), *anjaana* (ignorance) and *mithya jnaana* (false knowledge) as synonyms, even though there may be minor differences in the nuances communicated by these words. Cf. T.M.P. Mahadevan, p. 18.

26. Cf. P.D. Shastri, The *Doctrine of Maayaa*, (London: Luzac and Co., 1911), pp. 6-7. Cf. Also J. Gonda, "The Original Sense and the Etymology of Sanskrit *Maayaa*", *Four Studies in the Language of the Veda*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1959), p. 127.

27. Cf. R.T.H. Griffith, *The Hymns of Rig-Veda*, (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Off, 1963), VI, 47,18; X, 54, 2 (Hereafter: *RV*). Cf. Also *BUB*, II, v, 19.

28. Cf. *RV*, III, 61,7; V, 63, 3-4.

29. Cf. J. Gonda, pp. 128-129.

30. Cf. P.D. Shastri, p. 10.

31. Cf. F. Max Mueller, trans., "Kaatha Upanishad", *SBE*, Vol. XV, Part II, I, ii, 4 B5 (Hereafter: *KU*).

32. Cf. *CU*, VIII, iii, 1-3.

33. Cf. *BU*, V, xiv, 1-3. Cf. Also Radhakrishnan S., trans., "Iisha Upanishad", The Principal Upanishads, ed. Radhakirshnan S., 2, 15, p. 577 (Hereafter: *IU*). Cf. Also *SU*, I, 10.

34. Cf. *SU*, IV, 10.

35. Cf. *BUB*, II, v, 19.

36. Cf. *BG*, XVIII, 61.

37. Cf. Radhakrishnan S., The Principal Upanishads, pp. 83-84.

38. Cf. *BG*, VII, 14, 25.

39. Cf. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya Lokaayata, A *Study in Ancient Materialism*, (New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1959), p. 648.

40. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, Vedaanta *Treatise*, p. 320.

41. Henrich Zimmer, Myths *and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. J. Campbell, (New Jersey: Princetion University Press, 1972), p. 24.

42. Cf. *VC*, pp. 14-18, 20.

43. A. Mahadeva Sastri, The *Vedaanta Doctrine of Sri Shankaraachaarya*, (Delhi: Sri Satgun Publications, 1986), p. 113.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

45. Cf. *VC*, p. 18.

46. Ramkant A. Sinari, p. 134.

47. Eliot Deutsch, p. 29.

48. Cf. *AB*,. Swami Nihilananda, p. 52.

49. *VC*, pp. 49-50.

50. Cf. Dasgupta S., Vol., I, p. 443.

51. Cf. *VC*, p. 51. Cf. Also A. Parthasarathy, Vedaanta *Treatise*, p. 113.

52. Cf. *VC*, p. 50.

53. Cf. *Ibid.*

54. Cf. *AB*,. Swami Nihilananda, p. 52.

55. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

56. Cf. *VSS*, no. 52, pp. 40-41.

57. *VSS*, no. 53, p. 41.

58. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 54, p. 42.

59. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 8, pp. 16-17.

60. Cf. *VSS*, no. 55, p. 43.

61. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 8, p. 17.

62. Cf. *VSS*, no. 56, pp. 44-45.

63. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 55, p. 43.

64. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 56, pp. 44-45. Cf. Also MU, I, i, 7.

65. Cf. *VSS*, no. 55, p. 44.

66. Cf. *Ibid.*

67. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 54, p. 42.

68. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 35, p. 26-27

69. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 36, pp. 27-28.

70. *Ibid.*, no. 36, p. 27.

71. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 58.

72. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 106-108.

73. Cf. *VSS*, no. 37, pp. 28-29.

74. Cf. Mahandranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 108-109. Cf. Also PI, I, 15-17.

75. Cf. *VSS*, no. 40, p.31.

76. Cf. *Ibid.*, nos. 41,47, pp. 32,36.

77. Sri Suresvaraachaarya, *Panchiikarna-Vaarttikam*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), no. 12 (Hereafter: *PV*).

78. *Ibid.*, no. 2.

79. *VSS*, no. 38, p. 29.

80. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

81. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 128. Cf. Also *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 59.

82. *BSB*, II, iii, 45, p. 509.

83. *Ibid.*, II, iii, 43, pp. 507-508.

84. Cf. *VSS*, no. 39, pp. 30-31.

85. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 129-130.

86. *PV*, no. 3.

87. Cf. *VSS*, no. 56, pp. 46-47.

88. *Ibid.*

89. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 57, p. 47.

90. C. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 12, pp. 25-26.

91. *PV*, nos. 8-10. Cf. Also *VSS*, nos. 99-100, pp. 62-63.

92. Cf. *VSS*, no. 102, p. 64. Cf. Also *BSB*, II, iv, 22.

93. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 129-130.

94. Cf. *PV*, nos. 4-6. Cf. Also *VSS*, no. 103, p. 64.

95. *PV*, nos. 4-6. Cf. Also *VSS*, no. 103, p. 64.

96. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 133-135. Cf. Also *VSS*, no. 104, p. 65.

97. Cf. *VSS*, nos. 104-110, pp. 65-66.

98. Cf. Mahendarnath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 135.

99. *PV*, no. 11.

100. Cf. *VSS*, nos. 90-91, pp. 57-59.

101. Cf. Rene Guenon, *Man and His Becoming According to Vedaanta*, trans. Richard C. Nicholson, (New Delhi: Oriental Book Reprint Corporation, 1981), p. 101.

102. Cf. *VSS*, no. 91, pp. 58-59. Cf. Also *PV*, nos. 4-6.

103. Cf. *VSS*, no. 92, p. 59.

104. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 152-153.

105. Cf. *PV*, nos. 39-42.

106. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 43.

107. Cf. *VSS*, no. 46, pp. 34-35.

108. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 152.

109. Cf. Cf. Shankara, *Pachiikaranam of Sri Shankaraachaarya*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), pp. xvii-xviii (Hereafter: *PM*). Cf. Also *AB*, Parthasararthy, no. 14, pp. 30-31.

110. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, Vedaanta *Treatise*, p. 163.

111. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

112. Cf. *VSS*, no. 46, pp. 36-37.

113. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 60, pp. 48.

114. Cf. *PV*, nos. 31-34. Cf. Also *VSS*, nos. 61-62, 65, pp. 48,49.

115. Cf. *VSS*, no. 63, p. 48. Cf. Also Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 142.

116. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 13, p. 28.

117. Cf. *VSS*, no. 64, pp. 48-49.

118. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 150.

119. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 13, p. 28. Cf. Also *VSS*, nos. 75-76, pp. 52-53.

120. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 145-146. Cf. Also *BSB*, I, v, 3.

121. Cf. PI, II, 12, 14-15.

122. Cf. Swahanenda Swami, Chaandogya *Upanishad*, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1975) VII, 17-20.

123. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 146-148. Cf. Also *VSS*, nos. 68-69, pp. 49-50.

124. Cf. *VSS*, no. 69, p. 50.

125. *PV*, nos. 31-34.

126. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 137-138.

127. Cf. *VSS*, nos., 77-83, pp. 53-54. Cf. Also *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 13, pp. 28-29.

128. Cf. *VSS*, no. 87, p. 55.

129. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 13, p. 29.

130. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 135-136.

131. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

132. Cf. *VSS*, no, 115, p. 69. Cf. Also *PV*, nos. 13-28.

133. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 13, p. 29.

134. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 131. Cf. Also Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 150-153. Cf. Also A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 141-143.

135. Cf. *VSS*, no. 89, pp. 56-57.

136. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, Vedaanta *Treatise*, pp. pp. 143-144.

137. Cf. *BSB*, II, iii, 50, pp. 515-516

138. Cf. Cf. *PV*, no. 30.

139. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 152-153. Cf. Also A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 144, 166.

140. *PV*, nos. 37-38.

141. Cf. *BSB*, III, ii, 4. Cf. Also William M. Indich, Consciousness *in Advaita Vedaanta*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1995), pp. 82-87. Cf. Also. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Though and Culture*, pp. 152-153.

142. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 152-153. Cf. Also William M. Indich, pp. 95-96.

143. Cf. Ma.U., 1. 5. Cf. Also *BU*, IV, iii, 15,21.

144. Cf. *VSS*, no. 46, pp. 34-36.

145. Upanishads postulate a fourth state, viz., the *tuuriya* as distinct from other three states. It is the absolute self-transcending state, which bypasses the limitations of time, space, and causality. This state is completely free from *avidhyaa* and its products, which vitiate other three states. This fourth state is the state of self-realization. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 152-153. Cf. Also E.I. Warrier, *Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and Shankara's Advaita*, (India: Vohra Publishers and Distributers, 1990), pp. 116-118. Cf. Also *BUB*, IV, iii, 15.

146. Cf. *VSS*, no. 55, pp. 43-44.

147. Cf. *VSS*, no. 116, p. 70.

148. Cf. *PM*, p. xviii

149. Cf. *VSS*, no. 118, p. 71.

150. *PV*, nos. 31, 37-38, 43.

151. *Ibid.*, no. 44

152. Cf. *Ibid.*

153. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 45.

154. Cf. Ma.U., I, vii.

155. Cf. *BSB*, II, i, 33.

156. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The System of Vedic Thought and Culture, pp. 45-46.

157. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 43.

158. Ramamurthi A., p. 15.

159. *BSB*, II, iii, 39, p. 497.

160 Cf. Shankara, "Taittiiriya Upanishad Bhaashya", *Upanishad Bhaashyas (Aitareeya, Iisha, Kaatha, Keena, Mundaka, Prasana, Taittiiriya Upanishads)*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, Vol. II, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957), II, viii, 5 (Hereafter: *TUB*).

161. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 41, pp. 83-84.

162. Cf. *Ibid.*

163. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

164. Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 60, pp. 116-118.

165. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, The *System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, P. 175.

166. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-184.

167. Cf. *Ibid.*, 192-202. Vedaantins make use of inference to establish the unreality of the empirical existence and the reality of the trans-empirical existence. The inference is stated as follows: "The manifold existence is false, because of its being different from *Brahman*. All that is not *Brahman* is false like the silver in the mother-of-pearl." *Ibid.*, p. 202.

168. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

169. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

170. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-217.

171. Cf. D.M. Datta, *The Six Ways of Knowing: A Critical Study of the Advaita Theory of Knowledge*, (Calcutta: The University of Calcutta, 1972), p. 251.

172. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 205-208.

173. Cf. Eliot Deutsch, p. 69.

CHAPTER THREE

PATH TO SELF-REALIZATION

In the preceding two chapters, we made a study of the state of self-realization and the state of ignorance respectively. Our analysis of the state of self-realization, in the first chapter, helped us to understand that the ultimate reality behind this universe is *Brahman*, the pure consciousness in *jiiva* is *Aatman* and that they are fundamentally one. Besides, it is a non-dual state of unbroken bliss, in which the seeker of *Brahman* experiences the absolute in his self and views the whole world form the oneness-perspective of *Brahman*. Our study of the state of ignorance, in the second chapter, brought to light the nature of phenomenal existence, in which a person is caught up with the *Iishvara* -- *jiiva* experience, which is brought about by the superimposing activity of the cosmic and individual *maayaa* on *Brahman*. As a result, the non-dual *Brahman* identical with *Aatman* is experienced by the *jiiva* in three cosmic states, viz., the *Viraat*, the *Hirayanagarbha*, and *Iishvara*, and three individual states, i.e., the *Vishva*, the *Taijasa* and the *Praanja*. The second chapter also pointed out to the fact that only way to experience self-realization is to transcend the state of ignorance in all its aspects. The removal of ignorance is the condition on which the identity experience between *Brahman* and *Aatman* can happen. Thus, the negation of ignorance is a *sine qua non* for *Brahman*-experience. Shankara says: "The following knowledge [the knowledge of *Brahman*, i.e., self-realization] does not arise without negating the previous one [superimposed knowledge that is characteristic of the state of ignorance] . . . [as] the knowledge of the rope does not come without destroying that of the snake in the snake-rope."[1] Thus, for Shankara, man's movement towards authentic self-realization is an ascending movement, like climbing a ladder, in which the lower stages are given up, when the higher stage is attained. The path that leads to self-realization is called *Brahmaajijnaasa*, which is the topic of our consideration in the first section of this chapter. The second section deals with the *jnaana* path to self-realization proposed by Shankara. In the third section we elaborate the nature of release (*Samaadhi*) and the nature of the self-realized man (*Brahmajnaani*).

3.1. NATURE AND METHODS OF THE PATHI

In this section we clarify the nature of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. Besides, we will also look into the methods proposed by Shankara in the attainment of the state of self-realization.

3.1.1. Nature of *Brahmaajijnaasa*

Here, we analyze the nature of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, the path to self-realization, by highlighting its meaning. Having spelt out the meaning of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, we would explicate its nature by distinguishing it from *Brahmaanubhava*, the self-realization.

3.1.1.1. Meaning of *Brahmaajijnaasa*

Brahmaanubhava is an immediate and direct experience. So there is no need of any means to attain it. Besides, it is an absolute and trans-empirical experience, that it is not possible to attain it by the use of any empirical or relative means. But, though we cannot bring about *Brahmaanubhava*, still we can remove ignorance and pave the way for the realization of the self. The non-realization of the self is as a result of ignorance, and the removal of ignorance is all that we need to do in order that *Brahmaanubhava* can happen in us. "The attainment of the highest [*Brahmaanubhava*]", says Shankara, "means merely the removal of ignorance and nothing more".[2] In darkness, though the objects are in contact with the senses, still we are not able to perceive them because of the presence of darkness. When we remove the darkness, we are able to perceive the objects as they are. For example, in semi-darkness a stump of tree appears like a man; when light comes in, we can recognize the real nature of object in question, i.e., the tree stump.[3] This is much the same in *Brahmaanubhava*. It is due to ignorance that the absolute reality, the *Brahman*, is seen as the world of phenomena. All that is required to attain self-realization is to remove ignorance that blinds one to see one's own nature. It is the wrong knowledge of the self that obstructs the perfect knowledge of the self, just as the perception of the silver in the pearl-shell obstructs the perception of the pearl-shell. When the obstruction of wrong knowledge is removed, the real nature of the self becomes self-revealed.[4] Thus, for Shankara, "except for the removal of ignorance of the superimposition of the non-self on the self, no effort, whether bodily or mental is necessary for the realization of the self.[5]

Brahmaajijnaasa is the process of attaining *Brahmaanubhava*. The aspirant undertakes this process in order to remove ignorance that prevents him from attaining self-realization. The term `*Brahmaajijnaasa*' derives from two Sanskrit terms, viz., `*Brahman*' which means `absolute reality' and `*jijnaasa*' which means `wish to know'. So literally *Brahmaajijnaasa* means `a wish to know *Brahman*, the absolute reality'. A wish emerges spontaneously from the knowledge that something is achievable by effort and that when achieved it will lead to desired results. Thus, a wish implies all the efforts involved in achieving the desired result.[6] Thus, by implication the term `*Brahmaajijnaasa*' means the deliberation on the upanishadic texts about *Brahman*, undertaken by the aspirant for getting direct knowledge of *Brahman*. `Wish' by implication means the deliberation resulting from the wish to know *Brahman* and `knowledge' means the special kind of direct knowledge of *Brahman*.[7] Both the verbs `to wish' and `to know' are transitive and must have their objects: `wish' has knowledge for its object and `knowledge' has *Brahman* as its object. But man must know first in order that he can wish the knowledge of *Brahman*. This knowledge is provided by the scriptures, viz., indirect, mediate and apparent knowledge that one gains from the study of scriptures. But the knowledge culminating in the direct realization of *Brahman* is the object of `the wish'. This knowledge of *Brahman* is as the result of the wish to know *Brahman* (*Brahmaajijnassa*). It involves intellectual deliberation on *Brahman*, moral life that opens one to the experience *Brahman* and the deep meditation on the mediate and indirect knowledge arrived at by the study of the scriptures. Thus, the knowledge arrived at in *Brahmaajijnaasa* is a mature knowledge, which culminates in the direct realization of *Brahman*.[8]

From what we have said in relation to the Sanskrit origins of the word `*Brahmaajijnaasa*', it is clear that this term stands for all the efforts an aspirant makes to move from the state of

ignorance to the state of self-realization. It would involve all the different means used by the aspirant to attain self-realization. It would include the physical and moral efforts an aspirant puts into purify his body and mind. It consists firstly, the disciplining of learning and deliberation one acquires in the intellectual level, to study and understand the import of the scriptural statement about *Brahman*. Secondly, the guidance one gets from his *Guru*, in clarifying the doubts that may arise in the process of scriptural study. Thirdly, the meditation the aspirant undertakes to practice in order to have direct experience of *Brahman*. Thus, *Brahmaajijnaasa* is the path to self-realization. It would embrace the different means used and efforts made by the aspirant to transcendent the duality of the empirical order and attain the identity consciousness.[9]

Now that we have clarified the meaning of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, we can make an attempt to differentiate it from *Brahmaanubhava*, the goal of *Brahmaajijnaasa*.

3.1.1.2. *Brahmaajijnaasa* and *Brahmaanubhava*

Brahmaajijnaasa is a process, in which the seeker in an ascending manner moves towards *Brahman* by removing the state of ignorance that is characteristic of the phenomenal existence. The aspirant having taken upon himself the process *Brahmaajijnaasa* goes through its different stages. These help him to get rid of ignorance, which is the cause of duality and multiplicity. When ignorance is removed, and with it all multiplicity, the truth about oneself dawns. For Shankara, the *jnaana* path is the fundamental aspect of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, as only knowledge is able to remove ignorance. In *jnaana* path, by hearing is removed the doubt from an unprepared mind that the Upanishads cannot impart the knowledge of *Brahman*. Reflection removes the doubt that the self and *Brahman* cannot be one, especially by giving logical and reasonable arguments. Through meditation the mind is withdrawn from all distractions and things other than *Brahman*. This process of *Brahmaajijnaasa* gradually removes all traces of ignorance from the aspirant and thereby opens the way to *Brahmaanubhava*, the ultimate liberation. Hearing, reflection and meditation generate knowledge by the removal of ignorance. When all consequences of ignorance, such as duality and differences are removed, there dawns the self-knowledge, which is self-realization.[10]

Brahmaajijnaasa does not cause the absorption into *Brahman*, because it deals only with what is known from hearing. The knowledge attained through *Brahmaajijnaasa* is an indirect knowledge. The knowledge attained through the process *Brahmaajijnaasa*, by concentrating on the import of the scriptures is the highest intellectual knowledge possible. Nevertheless, *Brahmaanubhava* is not attained with *Brahmaajijnaasa*, but the former is above and beyond the latter, since the direct and immediate experience of one's self. Dr. Smet remarks the following about *Brahmaajijnaasa* and its relationship to *Brahmaanubhava*:

> *Brahmaajijnaasa* is only a preparation, a progressive removal of obstacles to knowledge, ÿ[the] protracted suicide of *ajnaana* (ignorance). *Vidhyaa* (true knowledge) cannot be a result, but a direct, independent realization, and awakening or reality, an intuition suddenly dawning upon the seeker. It is

> direct knowledge, while the result affected by the whole *Brahmaajijnaasa* can be nothing higher than an indirect knowledge.[11]

The occurrence of *Brahmaanubhava* is simultaneous with the removal of ignorance from the seeker. When, ignorance is removed, by the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, there follows immediately the truth about oneself, i.e., one's absolute absorption into *Brahman*. At this stage the indirect knowledge of reflection (*vichaara*) gives way to right discrimination (*viveeka*). Now, there is no activity and the intellect of the aspirant sees through the appearance, recognizing his oneness with *Brahman*. When this happens, the aspirant knows that he is *Brahman* and all duality and multiplicity disappears, since he realizes the fact that all is *Brahman*.[12] This realization of one's absorption into and identity with *Brahman* is *Brahmaanubhava*, the true liberation. The *Brahmaajijnaasa* is a preparation, while *Brahmaanubhava* is the end.

Now that we have clarified the nature of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, by exploring its meaning and distinguishing it from self-realization, we could move on to speak of the methods used by the Advaitin, in the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*.

3.1.2. Methods of *Brahmaajijnaasa*

Shankara's Advaita Vedaanta recognizes a dualism in the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. In other words, he speaks of an indirect and a direct method in *Brahmaajijnaasa*. In this section, we could clarify each of these methods and the reason why Shankara advocated these dual methods. Besides, we would also indicate the primacyof the direct method in the attainment of self-realization.

3.1.2.1. Indirect Method

By indirect methods Shankara means the path of action (*karmayoga*) and the path of devotion (*bhaktiyoga*). These open in the individual aspirant a willingness to surrender his energy in a life of service and to give with a loving heart. The willing surrender of one's life in generous service calls one to live a life of sacrifice and action. For such a life of action, it is necessary to work towards eliminating selfish motives and intentions that stem from animal instincts in man. Besides, the aspirant must learn to do everything he does without any self-interest (*nishkaamakarma*)[13] Action, thus, done in love and faith would open the heart of the aspirant for higher level of existence. The life of sacrifice is a stream through which the divine flow can envelop the heart of the aspirant to a deeper and fuller life of love and devotion. Life of devotion prepares the seeker for deeper levels of sweetness and bliss. These transformations take place gradually, leading the seeker to still higher stages.[14] We could consider these two indirect methods in some detail.

3.1.2.1.1. *Karmayoga*

The path of action is proposed for persons of mixed temperaments, viz., persons who are both emotional and rational. These are energetic personalities who have an inherent orientation towards activity, work and service. *Karma* path calls for the simultaneous use

of one's head and heart. A *karmayogi* dedicates his activities in love and devotion to the Lord. In the process, he sheds his personality off worldly thoughts and pleasures, gets his mind purified and his attention is turned to the contemplation of the supreme self, which is the source of his activity of love and service.[15]

In order to attain this goal of perfect action, which will lead to the contemplation of the self, the seeker of *karma* path must let go of his personal likes (*ragga*) and dislikes (*dwesha*) in performing his action. One should not do an action because one likes it; nor should one give up certain actions because he dislikes it. One must learn to overcome one's whims and fancies in performing actions. Thus, the greatest enemies of man are his likes and dislikes, for they make even the highest type of activity meaningless. Avoidance of negative activity does not consist in doing what one does not like, but rather in performing actions without any personal preferences. It consists in obtaining a sense of objectivity and using one's discriminating intellect to judge and decide on a proper course of action, irrespective of one's likes and dislikes. In this manner, one should be able to remove negative activity from one's life.[16]

Once a person brings about a sense of objectivity and steadiness by removing acts by likes and dislikes, he must cultivate positive activity. In the words of Giita, positive activity consists in acting dynamically surrendering all one's actions to the Lord, allowing one's thoughts to rest on the supreme self. Besides, such action must be free from egoism, hope and feverish excitement.[17] This verse from Giita speaks of twofold characteristics of positive activity, viz., acting dynamically so as to use one's body, mind and intellect purposefully resting on the supreme Lord; and not to allow the energies produced by dynamic action be dissipated in an unproductive manner. The first characteristic involves engaging in constant action, using the body, because action builds up energy in the body, while inaction weakens a person's body. In performing the action one's thoughts must rest on the Lord, always becoming aware that the inner self is the foundation of one's actions. In this manner one builds up mental stamina and intellectual ability for work. Thus, positive activity consists in building up one's body, mind and intellect that the person is ready for genuine action. Secondly, once the energy of a person is built up by dynamic action that is resting on the Lord, the person must see that the energies thus built up should not be lost. There are three outlets that dissipate energy, viz., egoism, hope and excitement. Egoism and self-interest can vitiate a person's sense of purpose. So one must see that self-interest does not lead a person astray from the path of disinterested action (*nishkaama karma*). Again hope of enjoying the fruits of one's actions can de-rout a person from good intentions. So a person seeks the path of *karma* must detest craving for enjoyment. Besides, excitement brings unrest in a person's sphere of activity. An excited person cannot be fully responsible for his duties and responsibilities. Thus, egoism vitiates the past, by focusing on a person's past activities; the hope of enjoyment dissipates a person acting purposefully in the future; and excitement disturbs the present activity. When a seeker of the *karma* path performs dynamic action resting his thoughts on the Lord, and prevents egoism, hope and excitement to vitiate the energy in the threefold temporal dimensions of his life, he becomes a *karmayogi*.[18] Having analyzed the path of action we could proceed to consider the path of devotion, the other indirect method.

3.1.2.1.2. *Bhaktiyoga*

Bhaktiyoga is meant for a person who is more emotional in nature, whose heart dominates his head. Such a person is more emotional, devotional and impulsive, while he is less rational, intellectual and discriminative. So persons of this nature could take recourse to *bhaktiyoga*. He often makes use of a personal God (*Ishtadeevata*) to pour out his love and devotion. He makes use of *mantras*, *bhajans* and chants to express his personal love for the Lord. His love and devotion for the Lord makes him single-minded in his attachment to the Lord. This, in turn, frees him from worldly attachments, which prepares him for deeper meditation and realization of self.[19]

When a person practices devotion to the Lord he experiences devotion in two ascending stages. Thus we can speak of two types of devotion, viz., *bheda-upaasana* and *abheda-upaasana*. In *bheda-upaasana* a difference-in-identity is kept in view. The seeker, in this state, while enjoys the delights of the union in love, keeps himself separate. *Abheda-upaasana* is a state, in which, the identity with the absolute is kept in view. Here, the aspirant gradually loses himself in the object of his love and worship. Thus, in the latter state, there is the possibility of identity consciousness, as life in the world does not seem anything more than the mental life of the seeker. Such an identity consciousness can take place in two different processes, viz., the process of sinking and the process of expansion. In the sinking process, the seeker feels that his soul is placed in the all- pervasive consciousness. Feeling the immanence of the bliss, the seeker surrenders his self completely. The complete surrender brings about psychological and spiritual transformations in the seeker. He experiences every mental modification in a new vision and meaning, as everything is viewed in relationship to the infinite. There is complete delight and deep satisfaction in the soul. The intensity of devotion in love and the inner delight and satisfaction make the finite self-consciousness to forget itself and be absorbed in the immanent infinite consciousness. The process of expansion consists in the gradual realization, in the seeker, that he is the immanent principle of the cosmos. When this realization takes over the aspirant, he does not any more feel that he is placed in the vastness of the cosmos, but rather finds the entire universe is the reflection of his own being. In other words, he feels within himself the totality of existence. In the process, his sense of finite personality dissolves into an impersonal expansive conscious existence.[20] Having looked into the indirect methods of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, viz., *karmayoga* and *bhaktiyoda*, we could make an attempt to study the direct method in the next section.

3.1.2.2. Direct Method

Direct method refers to the *jnaana* path to self-realization. Direct method of *jnaana* path is meant for a person, who is rational and whose head dominates his heart. As a result, such a person is more intellectual and discriminative, while less emotional and impulsive. He is not moved by his feelings, as his intellect is able to view events impartially. A man of intellect is not satisfied in postulating a God and worshipping Him. But a man of wisdom looks for arguments to justify such postulation. The significant characteristic of a person with an intellect bend of mind is his ability to discriminate between the phenomenal and

the transcendental. He has the propensity for deeper meditation and experience of the transcendental self.[21]

Jnaanayoga is designed for persons of intelligence, who can ask fundamental questions about this universe and draw answers out of their reflection. The knowledge they acquire is not merely intellectual, but experiential and existential. The *jnaana* path is described as `*nitya anitya viveeka vichaara*', `the discrimination between the eternal and the temporal by way of reflection'. Thus, *jnaanayoga* constantly attempts to distinguish the permanent from the impermanent, the noumena and the phenomena, the transcendental and the terrestrial, and the real and the unreal, so that the seeker of knowledge can realize the ultimate knowledge of *Brahman* as identical with *Aatman*. [22] For Advaitins *jnaana* path is the only way for the direct experience of *Brahman*, as it is only true knowledge that can remove ignorance. Thus, the direct method of *jnaana* path involves a deep understanding of the illusory nature of the phenomenal world and the fundamental oneness of everything in *Brahman*. Besides, it implies a discriminative consciousness that would enable the aspirant to break through the appearance and apprehend the underlying absolute reality behind the manifold world of everyday experience.[23]

3.1.2.3. Need for and Limitation of the Indirect Method

Though Shankara was convinced of the primacy of the direct method of knowledge for the removal of ignorance, he did give a place for the indirect methods, viz., the path of action and the path of devotion. He accepted them because their practical necessity, as vast majority of people in the world would not be able to give themselves directly to the demands of a life that involves reflection and intellectual activity. In other words, direct method would not be possible for everyone, as all may not be able to attain the vision of pure reason and discriminative consciousness. But if persons have given themselves to lower levels of existence, i.e., service and love, they would gradually come to desire wisdom, transcending empirical state of existence. It was Shankara's belief that, for most people, the path of knowledge can begin to have any meaning, when they have satisfied the will and the heart, as it will lead to the realization of the absolute behind the illusory and the relative. The focus of *niskaama karma* on the service of others and *bhakti* on love of the supreme Lord, would make the life of real renunciation easy while living in the phenomenal world. This is probably the reason that Shankara retained the *jiiva -- Iishvara* ideal in his system of thought, even though he was convinced of the truth of *Brahman -- Aatmana* identity. Thus, Shankara proposed the indirect methods to persons dominated by emotion and action, that having satisfied the needs in the levels of emotion and action, they can move towards the higher intellectual and discriminative consciousness. In other words, Shankara admitted the possibility of a life of love in service and service in love, only as a help to those seekers of *Brahman*, who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to open themselves to a life of reflection (*vichaara*) and discrimination (*viveeka*).[24]

In speaking of the various means to remove ignorance Shankara argues that neither action nor devotion are able to remove ignorance. These two means work in the realm of ignorance. The former concentrates on performing various actions in the world of phenomena, while the latter helps the aspirant to concentrate on the supreme Lord. Both

action and devotion presuppose duality and are not opposed to ignorance. A man who performs good actions and a devoted man can still be in the illusion of ignorance and may never know the true nature of *Brahman*. Therefore, action and devotion do not succeed in removing ignorance. Shankara very strongly argues for the primacy of knowledge, in the removing ignorance. Knowledge is directly opposed to ignorance. Knowledge and ignorance about a particular reality cannot coexist in a person, for knowledge drives away ignorance. Though knowledge cannot bring about self-realization, still it can indirectly remove ignorance by its very presence. "Whether ignorance means, doubt or false knowledge", says Shankara, "it is always removable by knowledge only, but not by action in any form, for there is no contradiction between ignorance and action.[25] Thus, indirect paths of service and love are not by themselves capable of removing ignorance, even though they can open the individual aspirant to a life of wisdom gradually.[26] From what we have said so far, it is clear that while Shankara holding for the primacy of *jnaana*, recognizes the significance of *karma* and *bhakti*, for pragmatic reasons.

In the foregoing section, we clarified the nature of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, the path to self-realization. We also highlighted the indirect methods of *karmayoga* and *bhaktiyoga* and their need in the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa* and their limitation in removing ignorance. Besides, we introduced the direct method of the *jnaana* path. In the following section, we attempt to elaborate Shankara's *jnaana* path and its stages in the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*.

3.2. STAGES OF THE *JNAANA* PATH

In order to study the scriptures and thereby remove ignorance, Shankara proposes certain physical, moral and intellectual preparations. These form the three stages of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. The physical preparation aims at helping the seeker to attain full control over his body and this done by what Vedaantins call *Hathayoga*. The moral preparation has for its goal the purification of the mind, by removing all inclinations to evil. The intellectual preparation intends to grasp the full import of the scriptures with the intellectual study of the scriptural texts. We could, now, elaborate these three in detail.

3.2.1. *Hathayoga*: Physical Preparation

In this section we would like to clarify the meaning of *Hathayoga* and its main limps, viz., posture (*aasana*) and breath-control (*praanaayaama*).

3.2.1.1. Meaning of *Hathayoga*

The high intellectual penetration involved in the study of the scriptures implies that the seeker of *Brahmaabubhava* has full control over his body. The stability of the gross body is required for its normal functioning. When it comes to preparing oneself for higher intellectual and spiritual training, there is the need to discipline the body sufficiently, so as to make it a fit instrument for the realization of *Brahman*. The system of training that prepares the body for such higher state of existence is called *Hathayoga*.

The term `*Hathayoga*' comes from two Sanskrit terms `*hatha*' and `*yoga*'. The term `*hatha*' means violence, force and oppression. The word `*yoga*' means a technique prescribed for the removal of the tendencies (*vaasanas*) of the body and the mind. Thus, *Hathayoga* means physical disciplines, which an individual undertakes, which involves a certain amount of violence, force or oppression to the body. Therefore, the practice of *Hathayoga* involves a certain amount of compulsion, either administered by others or by oneself. The aim of *Hathayoga* is to purify the tendencies of the body and mind that the intellect can begin to reason, which would enable the aspirant to study the scripture and thereby start the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. Many practices, such as different forms of self-torture, standing on one leg, holding up arms, inhaling smoke with head inverted, piercing different parts of the body with sharp instruments and similar practices are included in the *Hathayoga*.[27] It increases vitality in the body, gives good health and preserves great amount of energy within the aspirant, as *Hathayoga* opens the aspirant for the life-process of the cosmic *praana*.[28]

3.2.1.2. Limps of *Hathayoga*

Though there are many practices included in *Hathayoga*, its two main limps are posture (*aasana*) and breath-control (*praanaayaama*), to which we turn our attention in this section.

3.2.1.2.1. Posture

The first limp of *Hathayoga* is posture (*aasana*). It consists in placing the body in various positions that would lead to the discipline of the bodily system. *Aasana* helps the body to get rid of restlessness that blocks deep reflection and concentration. Posture brings the entire physical organism of the aspirant under the control of his will. It is different from other types of physical exercises, as its aim is to make the body best fitted for the highest type of experience. The *hathayogin* keeps his body free from all impurities, his nervous system in tact and gains control over the different muscles of the body by the practice of the *aasanas*.[29]

Speaking of posture Shankara says that the real posture is one in which the meditation on *Brahman* flows spontaneously and unceasingly. He did not approve any posture that brings pains and thus distracts the mind from meditation on *Brahman*. Thus, for Shankara, the posture that a true aspirant of the spiritual path must learn and practice is that which genuinely helps meditation in the highest level, by bringing a serene, calm and relaxed state of the body.[30] Shankara mentions two of such *yogic* postures that are truly conducive to the highest level of meditation, viz., *Siddhaasana* and *Mulabandha*. The former is a posture, which can help the aspirant to have a depth level concentration and meditation that can bring about complete merger with *Brahman*. The latter is a posture that can assist the aspirant to open his mind so totally to *Brahman*, that it can take hold of the mind of the aspirant, in the process restraining the mind from all other pushes and pulls.[31] The practice of the above mentioned *aasanas* bring about an equipoise of all the limps of the body (*dehasaamya*), which is conducive to the experience of total absorption in the *Brahman*.[32] Thus, for Shankara, while seated in meditation one should definitely use postures, but one's

main focus should not be centered on posture. A mere turning of attention on posture alone by straightening the body is compared to a dried up tree, which does not bring about equipoise of limps. Therefore, a person should use postures that would open the person's whole attention on meditation on *Brahman*. In other words, practice of posture as an end is of no avail; but it must be practiced only in view of genuine help for meditation.[33]

3.2.1.2.2. Breath-control

Genuine practice of the posture helps the aspirant to the practice of the second limp, breath-control (*praanaayaama*). It is a method with the help of which, the aspirant controls vital power of breathing, which is the basis of organic life. It keeps under check one's inhalation and exhalation. For Patanjali, the founder of the Yoga System, *praanaayaama* involves controlling the motion of inhalation and exhalation. There are three steps in breath-control. The first one is *puraka*, which consists in taking in breath; the second is *kumbahaka*, which means to hold the breath taken in for some time in the lungs; and the last step is *rechaka*, which is to throw out the breath retained in the lungs during the second stage. It was Patanjali's opinion that the mind would be naturally controlled if one practices the restraining of breath and thereby prevents mind's communication with the external world. But, Shankara does not subscribe to Patanjali's view. He holds that the breath is entirely dependent on the mind and not the mind on breathing. Therefore, by restricting the breathing one cannot restrain the mind. On the contrary, the control of the mind would effectively bring about restraining of the breath. So the aspirant, instead of wasting his energy in his attempt to restrain the breath, must always try to control the mind. When the mind is controlled, it would automatically lead to the restraining of the breath.[34]

Thus, Shankara holds for the superiority of the mind over breathing and not vice versa. This makes him give the following definition of *praanaayaama*. "The restraint of all modifications of the mind by regarding all mental states like *chitta* as *Brahman* alone, is called *praanaayaama*." [35] Thus, genuine practice of breath-control is not a mere breathing in of air, retaining of air in the lungs and breathing out of the retained air. If this were so, *praanaayaama* would be a function done in relation to the physical sense organ of breathing, viz., the nose. But, for Shankara, breath-control has to do with the control of the mind in every aspect and meditation on *Brahman*. That is why he says the following regarding *praanaayaama*: "The negation of the phenomenal world is known as *rechaka* (breathing out), the thought `I am verily *Brahman*' is called *puraka* (breathing in) and the steadiness of that thought thereafter is called *kumbhaka* (restraining the breath). This is the real course of *praanaayaama* for the enlightened, whereas the ignorant only torture the nose."[36]

Thus, for an Advaitin, *praanaayaama* if practiced as advocated by Shankara, can lead to complete control over the modifications of the mind (*chitta-vritti*). It helps him to achieve complete will power over one's life force. If practiced consistently, one can learn to restrain the vital process completely. According to Advaitin, *praanaayaama* has two purposes. Firstly, it brings about perfection in the body. Secondly, it helps to awaken the *praanic* dynamism, i.e., vast stored up energy, which opens the aspirant for extra-ordinary

consciousness. As a result, the moral and spiritual possibilities are awakened due to the practice of *praanaayaama*. Breath-control, thus, helps the aspirant to control instincts, passions and impulses that disturb the peace of mind. It can be practiced in two ways. Firstly, as a purely physical practice, to keep the heart beat under control, without any plan of the control of the mind. Secondly, as a psycho physical practice to control the lower passions, to open in the seeker higher qualities and to help mental and spiritual discipline. The practice of *praanaayaama* in the latter way is of great help to the seeker of *Brahmaanubava*.[37]

When one has completed the practice of *Hathayoga*, he has made the first step into the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. The total control of body, by way of posture and breath-control prepares the seeker of *Brahmaanubhava* to move towards the next stage of moral preparation.

3.2.2. Moral Preparation

In this section we would begin by pointing out the need, on the part of the aspirant, for moral transformation, in order that he can move on to the next step of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, viz., the study of scriptures. Then we proceed to the content of the moral preparation, i.e., the practice of four disciplines known as the instruments of spiritual path and the four qualities that the seeker of *Brahman* should acquire in order to be worthy of self-realization. Besides, we would also look into a few other requirements that the aspirant must practice on his way to *Brahmaanubhava*.

3.2.2.1. Need for Moral Preparation

If the intellect is able to understand the import of the scriptural statements, it must be pure. The knowledge of *Brahman* revealed in the scripture, though expressed in terms of duality, still is the highest knowledge that can be known by the human intellect in the empirical realm. This knowledge cannot be grasped if the intellect is not open to understand eternal truth. Just as a stained mirror does not reflect things clearly, so is an impure mind cannot grasp *Brahman* intellectually from the study of the scriptures. Shankara affirms this point in his commentary on Mundaka Upanishad Bhaashya as follows:

> Though the intellect in all beings, is intrinsically able to make the self known [from the study of the scripture], still being polluted by such blemishes as attachment to external objects, etc., it becomes agitated and impure, and does not, like stained mirror or ruffled water make the reality of the self known, though it is ever at hand.[38]

Shankara uses another analogy to illustrate the same fact. Fire, by its nature, is able to burn the wood. But if the wood is wet, fire is not able to burn it. In the same way intellect, though it is able to know and understand the import of the scriptural statements, because it is clouded by passions and attachments to things, does not grasp *Brahman* from the study of the *mahaavaakyas*.[39] In other words, scriptural knowledge fails to accomplish its end, if man is not perfectly pure of heart. The capacity of the mind to discriminate between truth

and untruth is weakened, when passions and sensual pleasures sway the mind.[40] Thus, it is important to prepare oneself spiritually and to free the intellect from all passions, attachments and prejudices, in order to know the true nature of *Brahman* from the study of the scriptures and from the instructions of the *Guru*. So it is important that an aspirant goes through a course of moral preparation before he makes a serious attempt to study the scripture. Therefore, Shankara proposes four disciplines called the instruments of spiritual knowledge (*sadhanachatushtaya*), which the aspirant must practice before he ever begins the next state of the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, by the study of the scripture, under the guidance of the *Guru*. Now, we could turn out attention to the study of these four disciplines.

3.2.2.2. Four Instruments of Spiritual Path

The four disciplines are aimed at preparing the inner personality of the aspirant, that he would be able to grasp and take in the truth found in the scriptural texts. It the aspirant works on these disciplines, he would be able to get the best out of the study of the scripture. The greater an aspirant is rooted in these practices the greater his understanding of the *mahaavaakyas*. Thus, the proposed disciplines are not aimed at frightening the beginner in the spiritual path, but to help him in pursuit of spiritual knowledge.[41] We could now briefly speak of each of these disciplines of spiritual path in the following section.

3.2.2.2.1. Discipline in the Physical Level

The first discipline is the destruction of sins through the practice of austerities (*tapobhih ksinapaapaanaam*), which is a discipline at the physical level. The practice of austerities (*tapas*) does not consist in giving oneself to self-torturing, which would frustrate the true spirit of the aspirant. But, rather, it envisages two types of disciplines at the physical level, viz., a negative discipline which aims at preventing sensual dissipation by exercising self-control and a positive one that utilizes the conserved energy to move towards the highest ideal of self-realization.[42] These two disciplines correspond to the first two limps of *raajayoga* [43] of Patanjali, the founder of the Yoga System. The first limp of *raajayoga* is *yama*, which consists of five general disciplines of self-purification. They are the following. Non-injury, which involves not harming others by thoughts, words and deeds. Non-lying, which consists in maintaining identity between thoughts, words and deeds. Non-stealing, i.e., giving up the desire for other's things. Continence, i.e., abstaining from sexual intercourse and lustful thoughts. Non-acceptance of gifts which would likely to stand in the way of meditation.[44] The second limp of *raajayoga*, *niyama* consists in the practice of five virtues. They are the following. Cleanliness consists in the purity of body and mind. Contentment is the acceptance of what comes in life joyfully. Austerity is the practice of mortification. Study of the scriptures implies the repetition of the *mahaavaakyas* and the eternal syllable `*Aum*'. Worship of God involves knowledge of and loving devotion to God.[45]

Shankara says that the negative discipline of *yama* and the positive discipline of *niyama* should not be practiced mechanically, but must be done by means of the knowledge that everything is *Brahman*. If practiced in this manner most of these negative restraints and positive practices will truly help the aspirant.[46] When these two disciplines are applied not

mechanically, but intelligently with the thought of *Brahman*, though their practice may involve pain, they would bring satisfaction and contentment. Besides, they free the aspirant from sin (*paapa*) and the activities, which produce agitation of the mind and destroy mental peace.[47] Thus, the first spiritual discipline, the discipline in the physical level, with its positive and negative practices, destroys sins and inclination to sin in the aspirant and generates in him purity of body and mind.

3.2.2.2.2. Discipline in the Mental Level

The second spiritual discipline aims at restraining the aspirant in the level of the mind. It is aimed at bringing in the seeker a calmness of mind (*saantaanaam*). The mind, by its very nature, has the tendency to seek objects of the world through the help of the senses. The mind in seeking and knowing the objects goes out through the senses and modifies itself in the form of the object. It is in relation to these modifications of the mind (*chitta-vrittis*) it knows the objects. In doing so the mind remembers past enjoyments and anticipates in thought future possibilities. These, in turn, cause agitation in the mind, which prevents it from focusing itself on higher knowledge. The discipline at the level of the mind is aimed at disciplining the mind from drifting into the enjoyments of past objects and ruminating about future joys. It fundamentally consists in not allowing the mind to get lost in objects, whether past, present or future by removing its attention from the senses which are mind's gate ways to the world of objects, thereby attaining mental peace and tranquillity.[48] This mental discipline is comparable to the fifth limp of *raajayoga*, viz., *pratyaahaara* (withdrawal of senses), which consists in removing the focus of the mind's attention from the senses. In other words, in *pratyaahaara*, the aspirant is helped to withdraw the sense organs from the respective objects, which happens only when the mind does not allow it to be modified into objects by shutting down the senses.[49] Shankara says that such a withdrawal would be complete only when the aspirant realizes that *Aatman* is in all objects, allows this thought to envelop the mind and let the mind be absorbed in the supreme consciousness. [50] In this manner, the turning of the mind from the senses and sense objects, and turning it towards higher levels of being makes the mind to attain the calmness of mind (*saantaanaam*).[51]

That which helps the attainment of mental equipoise and calmness is the practice of silence (*mauna*). To quote Shankara: "The wise should always be one with the silence where from words together with the mind turn back without reaching it."[52] What Shankara means by this statement is that silence is where *Aatman* dwells, i.e., in the depths of one's inner silence dwells the true self and a mind crowded with words will never be able to reach it. The more the mind withdraws itself from words that are centered on the senses and experiences silence (*maunam*) it would arrive at the experience of *Aatman*. Shankara says further: "Who can describe That (*Brahman*) whence words turn away? (So silence is inevitable while describing *Brahman*). . . . [Therefore] silence is known among sages as congenital [i.e., inseparable from *Brahman*]. [This is why] the observance of silence by restraining speech . . . is ordained by the teachers of *Brahman* for the ignorant."[53] Thus, for Shankara, the second spiritual discipline, aimed at attaining calmness of mind, involves both the silencing of the senses, by silencing the modifications of the mind in all its aspects.

Therefore, the more an aspirant allows silence, which, according to Shankara, is congenital with *Brahman*, in his life, to that extent he would achieve mental poise and peacefulness.

3.2.2.2.3. Discipline in the Intellectual Level

The third spiritual discipline is one that focuses on the intellectual level, aims at freeing the aspirant from all desires (*viitaraaginaam*). A desire, is nothing else, but a plan entertained by the intellect to set right a lack felt within a person. When a person experiences an imperfection within himself, he sets in motion a scheme of action, prompted by the desire to experience a sense of well-being in the area of his lack. As long as a person is intellectually involved in accomplishing the plan that stems from desire, his mind remains agitated and disturbed. The imperfection experienced by the person often relates to the realm of his body, mind and intellect. The person experiences this lack, and the desire to rectify this lack by a plan of action remains only as long as he identifies himself with these mental faculties, which he believes are the source of the imperfection. Thus, a person's identification of himself with the limited faculties of the body, mind and intellect, is the basis of all desires. On the other hand, if a person removes his focus of attention from these faculties and sees his life in relation to the supreme *Brahman*, then he would not perceive himself as identical with the limited mind-body organism. In doing so a person removes himself from the source of all imperfections experienced by him. As a result, he does not any more experience imperfections, for he knows that his real being is all-perfect and eternal *Aatman*. When this thought takes hold of a person, not only does he experience imperfections, but also sheds all desires, which emerge from the realization of imperfection within himself. Thus, withdrawing one's attention from the material layers of one's personality and concentrating on *Brahman* would effect the cessation of all imperfections in a person, and so bring about the end of all desires that disturb and agitate the mind.[54]

This discipline at the intellectual levels is similar to the sixth limp of *raajayoga*, viz., *dhaaranaa* (concentration or one pointed attention). It consists in holding the mind on to some particular object. In other words, *dhaaranaa* is the total concentration, in which the mind's focus is fixed fully on to an object. Shankara commenting on this point says that when the mind is fully concentrated on an object and realizes it as *Brahman* discards all names and forms superimposed on the object by ignorance, then alone a person is said to have reached the culmination of *dhaaranaa*.[55] To quote Shankara: "The steadiness of the mind through realization of *Brahman* wherever the mind goes, is known as supreme *dhaaranaa*."[56] According to Shankara, one can attain this state of concentration by genuine practice of solitude and focusing on *Brahman*, who is beyond temporal distinction. "Solitude is known as space wherein the universe does not exist in the beginning, end or middle, but whereby it is pervaded at all times."[57] When an aspirant enters the state of solitude, he becomes *Brahman*, who alone is solitary, since it admits no second at any time. Thus, by practicing solitude, the aspirant is able to withdraw his attention from everything, including the distinction of time, viz., beginning, middle and end, and concentrate on non-dual *Brahman*, in whom resides the totality of time (*kaala*).[58] When an aspirant disciplines his intellect so as to arrive at such a state of deep concentration, wherein he is one with the solitary *Brahman*, all the desires that emerge from the experience of imperfection fall apart and the aspirant possesses compete well being and peace of mind.[59]

3.2.2.2.4. Discipline in the Spiritual Level

The fourth spiritual discipline is a discipline at the spiritual level. It is the consequence of the first three disciplines, viz., disciplines of the body, the mind and the intellect. It aims at creating in the aspirant a yearning for liberation (*mumukshuunaam*). In this discipline the mental energy generated by the disciplines of the body, the mind and the intellect is conserved and directed for gaining liberation (*moksha*). It involves the rejection of all the worldly desires and substituting this rejection with the desire for gaining spiritual liberation.[60] This discipline is facilitated by what Shankara calls the *drik-sthiti* (fixing the vision). It consists in directing the aspirant's vision on *Brahman* alone, which is pure consciousness, and wherein ceases all distinctions of the seer, the sight and the seen. In other words, one must convert one's everyday vision of the world into one of knowledge, in which one views as *Brahman*. Shankara calls this the noblest vision, because in it there is no distinction of high or low, great or small, since everything is merged in *Brahman*.[61] The fixing of vision on *Brahman* in the fourth discipline is possible because by way of the first three disciplines, the aspirant is purified in every aspect of his personality. Therefore, he can now direct all his energies to fix his vision on *Brahman* and desire his oneness with *Brahman*. Thus, the fixing of the vision on *Brahman* makes the aspirant to let go all worldly desires and desire nothing else but liberation. In this manner a total orientation towards *Brahman* is brought about.[62]

These four spiritual disciplines -- the disciplines at the physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual levels -- help the aspirant move from the world to *Brahman* and to substitute one's worldly desires with desire for liberation. In going through these four disciplines, genuine moral preparation in the aspirant happens. As the result of these practices the aspirant becomes a qualified person (*adhikari*) to begin the study of the scriptural texts. In the process the moral preparation of the *adhikari* acquires four qualities,[63] to which we turn our attention in the next section.

3.2.2.3. Four Qualities of the *Adhikari*

The qualified person acquires, as the result of the four disciplines called the instruments of spiritual knowledge (*sadhanachatushtaya*), four qualities. They are the following. The discrimination between the real and the unreal (*viveeka*); detachment from the unreal, i.e., renunciation (*vairaagya*); the practice of six fold virtues (*shadsampatti*) -- calmness (*shama*), self-control (*dama*), self-settledness(*uparati*), forbearance (*titiksha*), faith (*shraddha*) and complete concentration (*samaadhaana*); and hunger for self-realization (*mumukshvata*).[64] Each of these qualities morally prepares the student for the study of the scriptures and, therefore, they can be considered, as moral conditions required of the student, before ever he can undertake the deliberate and serious study of the scriptures. We could briefly describe each of them in the following sections.

3.2.2.3.1. Discrimination

The first moral condition required of the *adhikari* that he can begin his move towards the study of the scriptures is discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal (*nitya*

anitya vastu viveeka). It consists in an intuitive and firm conviction that *Brahman* alone is the absolute ground of all things, that which is really real and that all other things are unreal and phenomenal. According to *Vedaantasaara* it "consists of the discrimination that `*Brahman* alone is permanent substance' [unlimited by space and time] and that all things other than It, are transient."[65] Discrimination is the most fundamental quality that is necessary in an individual, because without it the other moral conditions are not possible. In other words, if one has not discriminated between the real and the unreal and has not recognized the absoluteness of *Brahman* there is no motivation to strive for its attainment.[66]

3.2.2.3.2. Renunciation

The second moral quality needed for the removal of ignorance is renunciation (*vairaagya*). It consists in not seeking the enjoyments of the fruits here and hereafter. Shankara defines renunciation as follows: "The indifference with which one treats the excreta of a crow -- such an indifference all objects of enjoyment from the realm of *Brahmaa* the realm of gods] to this world (in view of their perishable nature) is verily called pure *vairaagya*."[67] If a person renounces the enjoyment of this world, in expectation of better enjoyment in the next life, it would be a renunciation tainted with desires. Such a renunciation is not a true renunciation and it would not open the door for true knowledge. But a renunciation that comes out of the deliberation on the passing nature of this world and undertaken in recognition of the ultimate truth of *Brahman* is pure renunciation that would lead to higher levels of knowledge.[68] Thus, genuine practice of renunciation implies, firstly the negation of one's little self (*jiiva*) and secondly the assertion of the reality of *Aatman*. When a person gives up the ego's claims of `I', `me', `my' and `mine', thereby rejects egoistic feelings that engender one's false personality and asserts that his ultimate self is the universal spirit, a person truly practices renunciation. Such a renunciation truly leads a person to knowledge.[69]

The practice of such renunciation implies rigorous self-discipline to control the inner tendency of the aspirant to wander amidst sensuous experience and enjoy it. Renunciation is aimed at purification of emotions, perfection of the mental being and mastery over thought-consciousness. It would enable the aspirant to eliminate lawless tendencies, impulses and tendencies of animal nature, and build up good habits of mind.[70] Renunciation is, thus, the giving up of all the pleasures of the eyes, the ears, and the other senses. By renunciation one also gives up objects of transitory enjoyment, the desire for the body, as well as for the highest kind of spirit-body of a god.[71] It is an attitude indifference to all the seen and unseen results attainable by various means, whereby one becomes devoted to the scriptural teaching, and not carried away by one's own natural desires. But renunciation is not the state of absolute desirelessness or *Brahmaanubhava*. Rather it is a state where one desires nothing but self-realization.[72]

In renunciation one forgoes the pleasures the world can offer in order to concentrate on the study of the scriptures. Therefore, a life of renunciation gives the aspirant the opportunity to go for uninterrupted search after the goal of human existence, by a deeper understanding of the *mahaavaakyas*. Any person who is interested in absolute freedom

must take every step to transcend earthly ties and involvement, by way of renunciation. Vedaantins speak of two types of renunciation, viz., the *vibidisha sannyaasa* and the *vidwat sannyaasa*. The *Vibidisha sannyaasa* is the renunciation for the acquisition of knowledge. It is the renunciation practiced by the seeker. It does not merely consist in giving up worldly pleasures, but rather involves s systematic seeking of the life of wisdom. The aspirant while practicing this type of renunciation, besides denouncing attachment to the phenomenal enjoyments seeks after hearing and reflecting about *Aatman* and concentrating upon it. The *Vidwat sannyaasa* is a renunciation one practices after the attainment of true knowledge. Complete freedom from all desires and activities is characteristic of this type of renunciation. Thus, it is an existence without desire, in which renunciation coexists with true knowledge.[73]

3.2.2.3.3. Practice of Six Treasures

Thirdly the aspirant should try to live a virtuous life by the practice of six treasures (*shadsampatti*). When practiced, these virtues will help the aspirant's inner faculties and make the cultivation of higher knowledge possible. The six virtues are the following. Firstly, calmness (*shama*), which consists in developing the quality of inner serenity, that one can dwell on *Brahman* after abandoning all the desires by renunciation. Secondly, self-control (*dama*), which helps the aspirant to restrain his senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste, and thus open him to hear and listen to the instructions of the teacher. Thirdly, self-settledness (*uparati*) is the withdrawal of all forms of enjoyments. It helps the aspirant to relinquish all the joys of worldly life and embrace the life of a monk (*sannyaasin*). Apparently *uparati* differs very little from *shama* and *dama*. But there is a real difference between the former and the latter two. In practicing *shama* and *dama* there is an effort to restrain the mind's outgoing propensities, such as, curbing the mind's attention from all objects except hearing the scriptures, thinking of their meaning and meditating on them, and restraining external sense organs respectively. But in *uparati* the equipoise of the mind becomes spontaneous and no effort is made to gain it. Fourthly, forbearance (*titiksha*) is the endurance of all sufferings in life. It helps the aspirant not to be agitated by love and hate, pleasure and pain and all such pairs of opposites. Fifthly, faith (*shraddhaa*) the firm conviction and intuitive belief in the existence of the ultimate reality. At the same it is not a mechanical or unquestioning belief, but a conviction based on intellectual understanding of what is taught in the scriptures about the ultimate reality. Sixthly, complete concentration (*samaadhaana*) is the fixing of the mind on *Brahman* as taught by the scripture and competent teacher. These six virtues direct one's attention to the attainment of *Brhamaanubhava*.[74]

3.2.2.3.4. Hunger for Liberation

The fourth moral quality of the *adhikari* is his hunger for self-realization (*mumukshvata*). It consists in possessing an intense desire to get rid of ignorance and to attain *Brahmaanubhava*. "It is an intense longing of the student to free himself from all bondage pertaining to the body, the mind and the ego."[75] It is not a restless desire, but a result of the ethical practices mentioned above. Without this longing for liberation the ethical practices are really meaningless because a man may become morally perfect and may achieve many

supernatural powers, but if the desire for self-realization is absent in him, all his virtues will be of no significance.[76] It is the longing and desire for true knowledge or self-realization that gives motivation and meaning to the whole process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*.

3.2.2.4. Other Requirements of an *Adhikari*

We have looked into the four disciplines of the spiritual path and the four qualities required of a qualified student to undertake the study of the scriptures, in the last two sections. In the present section, we could move on to consider some other general requirements demanded of an *adhikari* that would also facilitate the scriptural study.

The aspirant can begin his study only if he practiced a life of chastity (*brahmachaarya*) and other austerities of student life prescribed by the Vedas. Besides, he also must acquire knowledge of the contents of the Vedaangas, books auxiliary to the Vedas. The Vedaangas include the science of proper articulation and pronunciation (*shiksha*), etymological explanation of difficult Vedic words (*nirukta*), the science of prosody (*chhandas*) astronomy (*jyotisha*) and ritual and ceremonies (*kalpa*).[77] Regarding the last of the Vedaangas, viz., ceremonies, there are a number of them which the *adhikari* is expected to practice or avoid practicing. The aspirant (*pramaataa*) is expected to avoid the practice of *kaamya karma*, which are ceremonies performed with a definite motive or desire, such as, *jyotishtoma*, which enables the performer to get the desired fruit like living in heaven.[78] He is also asked to refrain from performing *nishidda karma* (the forbidden acts), for they bring undesired results, such as, going to hell. These forbidden acts include actions like slaying a *Brahmin*, drinking and other similar vices.[79] The qualified student must practice *nitya karma*, which include *sandhyaa vandana*, such as, morning, noon and evening prayers, which are obligatory for the three higher castes. The non-performance of *nitya karma* though may not constitute a new sin, but will weaken a person's will, thereby prevent his propensity to check the inclinations to commit new sins.[80] Besides, the seeker of the scriptural study must practice *naimittika karma*, which are rites performed on special occasions.[81] The aspirant also must practice rites of penance (*praayaschittas*), such as *chaandraayana*.[82] He is also expected to practice devotions (*upaasanas*).[83]

The practice of *nitya karma* and similar other works are aimed at purifying the mind, by way of destruction of sin and acquisition of virtue. The purification of the mind effects in the aspirant an awareness of the nature of the phenomenal existence (*samsaara*). From the recognition of the peripheral nature of *samsaara* results renunciation (*vairaagya*), which gives rise to desire for liberation. The desire for liberation gives the incentive to search for the means of attaining it. From this search for the means arises the practice of *yoga*, which leads to the habitual tendency of the mind to concentrate in the knowledge of the meaning of the *mahaavaakyas*, such as `That art Thou', which destroys ignorance and identity of the self with *Brahman* is experienced. Thus, the regular practice of *nitya karma* other similar practices lead the seeker to the highest knowledge. The *upaasanas* aim at helping the aspirant in concentration of the mind on the *Ishtadeevata* and deepen it by loving devotion.[84] In this manner all such practices help the *adhikari* to build up genuine openness to the inner self and universal *Brahman*, thereby facilitates the study of the scripture.

While the aspirant goes through the four disciplines, practices the four qualities and performs other practices, he must never forget the fact that self-realization cannot be attained by the direct and mechanical performance of these spiritual practices. While not undermining the value and efficacy of these practices, he must remember that these disciplines are only preliminary preparations necessary for gaining ultimate experience of self-realization and the final removal of ignorance is effected only at the dawn of true knowledge. This can be explained with the help the illustration of the role of fire in cooking. Before fire is used to cook the food, the raw food is prepared by way of cleaning, peeling and cutting. These are necessary preparations in the cooking process. The real cooking is done when fire is applied on the food. It is fire that really and in actual fact cooks the food. In the same way, it is knowledge of the self that leads to final liberation, even though all other spiritual disciplines the *adhikari* has to go through are auxiliary preparations leading to the dawn of knowledge. It is very significant that the aspirant constantly remembers this truth, through out the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, the path to self-realization.[85]

We have looked into the various aspects of the moral preparation the aspirant has to go through in order that he becomes fully qualified to move into the next stage of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, the intellectual preparation. Intellectual preparation consists in the study of the import of the *mahavaakyas*, under the guidance of the *Guru*. The topic of the intellectual preparation occupies our attention, as we move into the next section.

3.2.3. Intellectual Preparation

The aspirant who is endowed with the above mentioned disciplines of spiritual knowledge is qualified to undertake the actual study of the scriptures which will, in turn, bring about the actual removal of ignorance. Shankara says: "This knowledge [that the self is *Brahman*] should be imparted only to him whose mind has been pacified, who has controlled his senses and is freed from all defects, who has practiced the duties enjoined by the scriptures and is possessed of good qualities, who is always obedient to the teacher and aspires only after liberation and nothing else."[86] The moral disciplines purify the intellect of the aspirant, freeing him from all passions and attachment, so that he can give himself uninterruptedly to the study of the scriptures.

More than other two stages of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, in the stage of intellectual preparation the role of the *Guru* is very significant. Fully qualified student cannot venture into the vast ocean of scriptural learning, unless competent *Guru* leads him into it. Even a person, who is well versed in the scriptures, should not undertake the journey towards *Brahman* without the guidance of a *Guru*. Therefore, for Shankara, instructions of the Guru are absolutely necessary, for the knowledge of *Brahman*, whether the aspirant is a person with scriptural knowledge or a qualified beginner (*adhikari*). Shankara affirms this in the Mundaka Upanishad Bhaashya as follows: "One though versed in scriptures, should not search independently after the knowledge of *Brahman*."[87] What Shankara implies by this statement is that every seeker of knowledge of *Brahman* must sit at the feet of the proper and competent *Guru*. Now we must clarify the nature of a proper and competent *Guru*. For Shankara, the *Guru* is a spiritual guide, who is learned in the Vedas, desireless and sinless. He says in his commentary on Brihdaaranyaka Upanishad that the *Guru* is "one who is

learned in the Vedas, without sin and not overcome by desire."[88] The genuine *Guru* is one who is well versed in the study of the Vedas and who has knowledge of the true import of the meaning of the Vedaantic aphorisms.[89] Thus, the *Guru* is a true teacher of knowledge of *Brahman* to any one who wishes to make the journey towards *Brahman*.[90] Other than these qualities, there is one quality that is most significant for a *Guru* being genuine is that he lives entirely in *Brahman* (*Brahmanishtha*). Shankara explaining this word `*Brahamanishtha*' says that the *Guru* is one who, after renouncing all forms of *karma*, is centered on *Brahman*, devoid of all attributes and one without a second.[91] In other words, the true teacher is one who has experienced the identity between his self and *Brahman*. Shankara says that the seeker of knowledge of *Brahman* should approach such a *Guru* in the spirit of humility and service, and with suitable gifts in his hands.[92] When a student approaches the *Guru* in this manner, the *Guru* through his infinite grace instructs the pupil by the method of *apavaada* (de-superimposition) and removes all superimposition (*adhyaaropa*) on *Brahman*, thus, prepares him for the knowledge of *Brahman*.[93] Mundaka Upanishad states: "To that pupil who has approached him [*Guru*] with due courtesy, whose mind has become perfectly calm, and who has control over his senses, the wise teacher should truly impart the knowledge of *Brahman* through which he knows the Being, imperishable and real."[94]

Thus, begins the intellectual preparation, the third stage of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, for the qualified student, at the feet of the *Guru*. The study of the scripture and the understanding its import and meaning takes place in three stages. The first stage is hearing (*sravana*), which, is followed by the state of reflection (*manaana*) and the final state of *Brahmaajijnaasa* is meditation (*nidhdhyaasana*). These three, namely, hearing, reflection and meditation, constitute the objective intellectual conditions for the removal of ignorance. Now we could proceed to an elaborate study of each of these stages of intellectual preparation.

3.2.3.1. Hearing

In this section we would briefly clarify the meaning of *sravana*. We would also make an attempt to give an illustration with the help of which its meaning would be made clear.

3.2.3.1.1. Meaning of Hearing

Hearing implies the idea of being taught. At the first stage of understanding the meaning of the Vedaantic statements, the competent teacher introduces the aspirant to the teachings of Advaita. The need for a teacher at this stage is very much stressed in the scriptures. "A *Guru* is like a boat on the boundless ocean which has for its water the principal struggle due to the rotation of the cycle of birth, decay and death."[95] Just as a boat is a place of safety for one who struggles in the ocean aimlessly, so the teacher, by his teaching directs one to union with *Brahman*, freeing him from transmigration. Again Kaatha Upanishad Bhaashya states: "When propounded by a teacher who sees no variety and is one with (*ananya*) the propounded *Brahman*, doubts whether the self exist or not, ÿ does not arise any longer for the self is such that it banishes doubts of all kinds."[96] Thus, *sravana* is the initiation of the aspirant to the traditional Vedaantic doctrine transmitted and passed on by the teachers.

Sravana at the same time is the mental activity, which helps the understanding of the upanishadic texts, leading to their only import, i.e., *Brahman*. In other words, *sravana* is not a mere hearing the truth about *Brahman* from the teacher or from the scriptures in a blind manner. But it involves an ascertaining on the part of the aspirant on what is heard. Thus, in *sravana* the student ascertains and establishes the true import of the scriptures, viz., `*Brahman* is one without a second'.[97] Without a genuine ascertaining *sravana* would be fruitless. This ascertaining is achieved by an examination of the texts through six tests or characteristic signs, namely, commencement and ending, repetition, uniqueness, result, eulogy and reason.[98] We could briefly clarify each of these texts. The first is commencement and ending. Commencement involves the presentation of the subject matter to be taught to the student, in *sravana*, at the beginning of a section, that the aspirant clearly comes to know the topic of his study. In the ending the same truth is restated not as a hypothesis but as a verified fact that the student knows about it with certainty. The second test, the repetition consists in frequent presentation of the subject matter in different parts of the section. It is aimed at helping the student to become more and more aware of the import of the subject matter by ascertaining each time it is repeated. The third is uniqueness of the subject matter. It consists in that the subject matter of a section is not available through any other source of knowledge, but only has to be understood in relation to the study of the scriptures. The fourth is the result. It is the utility of the subject matter of the section for the qualified student to move into the higher stages of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. In other words, the result consists in the utility of the subject matter, for its attainment. The fifth test, eulogy consists in praising the subject matter in different places of the section. It is aimed at instilling in the student a desire to hear attentively and inculcate in him its significance. The last test is reason, which consists in demonstrating the subject matter with rational arguments. It would help the qualified student to understand the thinking behind the subject matter and understand its import, which in the last analysis would lead to the right ascertaining of the meaning of the subject matter.[99] By the use of these six tests the student makes a deep effort to understand the import of the subject matter that he heard from the teacher or read from the Vedas. We move on, in the next section, to give an illustration of *sravana*, which would further clarify its meaning.

3.2.3.1.2. An Illustration of Hearing

In the sixth chapter of Chaandogya Upanishad we have a typical illustration of this first stage, namely hearing. Here the aspirant is Sivetaketu the grandson of Aruna. His father instructs him by using the six texts of *Sravana*. The subject matter of this instruction is `*Brahman*, the one without a second'. The analysis of the six tests used in hearing, in relation to the text in question, would give us an idea about the practice f *sravana*.

The first test is commencement and ending. They refer to the presentation of the subject matter of the section at the beginning and at the end of the section. The subject matter is introduced in the beginning of the section in the words, "one without a second"[100] and again at the end in the words, "thus has all this world, that [*Brahman*] for its self."[101] The second test is repetition, which consists in the frequent presentation of the subject matter again and again. For instance, the subject matter `*Brahman* is one without a second' is repeated nine times in this section, in different words, especially through the *mahaavaakya*

`That art Thou'.[102] The third is uniqueness, which means that the nature of the subject matter is such that it cannot be attained through any other means of knowledge than the study of the scriptures. In this section the subject matter `*Brahman* is one without a second' cannot be achieved in any other way except from the understanding of the meaning of the *mahaavaakyas*. This is indicated in the words: "Verily, those venerable men did not know this; for if they had known it, why would they have not told it to me? [103] The implication of this statement is that `the knowledge of *Brahman*, without a second' can be achieved only from the scriptures. The fourth test, the result, is the usefulness of the subject matter of the section. In this section the realization that *Brahman* is one without a second, brings about self-knowledge to the seeker. In other words, the utility of the knowledge of *Brahman* one without a second is its attainment.[104] The fifth, eulogy, consists in praising the subject matter at different places of the section. It is found in this section in the words, "Have you ever asked for, that instruction by which one hears what has not been heard; one thinks what has not been known; one has spoken in praise of *Brahman* without a second".[105] Finally reason, which consists in demonstrating the subject matter of the section. In this section we have the demonstration of `*Brahman* one without a second' in the words: "As by a lump of clay, all that is made of clay is known . . . every modification being an effect of speech, a mode and the clay is the only reality."[106] In other words, just as in knowing a lump of clay, we can know the nature of all things made of clay, so also in knowing that *Brahman* is one without a second, the nature of everything in the world is known, for *Brahman* is the ground of everything. The examples of a nugget of gold and a pair of nail scissors are also used to demonstrate the truth of `*Brahman* is one without a second', in the same fashion as the lump of clay.[107] In this manner three reasons are furnished to demonstrate the subject matter of the section, viz., `*Brahman* is one without a second'. Thus, the aspirant hearing the explanation of the *mahaavaakya* from the teacher, become familiar with its import and ascertains its meaning.

3.2.3.2. Reflection

In the last section we clarified the meaning of *sravana* and how it is used to help the qualified student to ascertain the true import of the *mahaavaakyas*. In this section, we will elaborate the second stage of the intellectual preparation, viz., reflection (*manaana*). We do this by analyzing its meaning and method with the help of illustrations.

3.2.3.2.1. Meaning of Reflection

The Keena Upanishad Bhaashya speaks about the second intellectual condition required for the removal of ignorance, viz., *manaana*, as follows:

> After being addressed by the teacher, the disciple (*shyshya*) sat at the solitary place [*vijana-desha*] and attended to nothing else (*ekaanta*), concentrated his thoughts (*saamhita*) and pondered over the meaning of *aagma* [the traditional teaching pointed out by his *Guru*], arrived at a conclusion through reasoning, made it [the teacher's instructions] his own experience, went back to his teacher and explained: `I think, I now know *Brahman*'.[108]

This passage clearly shows the nature and function of *manaana*. It is a mental activity, which consists in the employment of favorable arguments for the removal of the apparent contradictions that might arise during the study of the scripture against other means of valid knowledge. The truth pointed out by the teacher is difficult to grasp and seems to contradict the ordinary perception and knowledge obtained from the *pramaanas* other than the scripture. Thus, it is very important that the aspirant strengthen his conviction at this stage, by looking for rational basis for the teaching received from the teacher in *sravana*. Prof. Ramamurthi clearly points out the role of *manaana* as follows: "The purpose of it [*manaana*] is to fortify one's conviction of the truth from the scripture and to rid oneself of all doubts. . . . Another important function of reflection is to make one comprehend the real meaning of the scriptural statements by consistently interpreting them so that the apparent inconsistencies are resolved."[109]

But, though at this stage of reflection, one looks for arguments and reasons to justify the knowledge of *Brahman* received in *sravana*, still the arguments and reasons sought to strengthen one's conviction must not be contradictory to the teaching of the Upanishads. For, the scriptural authority is absolute, and reason is subservient to revelation, especially with regard to the knowledge of *Brahman*. Therefore, for Shankara, *manaana* is that continuous reflections performed with the aid of reasoning and that are subservient to the teaching of the Upanishads, upon the secondless reality of *Brahman*, that is known through *sravana*.[110]

Having clarified the meaning of *manaana*, we could proceed to analyze the negative method used by the aspirant during the state of reflection, in order to de-superimpose phenomenal qualities from *Brahman*.

3.2.3.2.2. The Method of Reflection

At the stage of *manaana*, the aspirant makes use of the negative method of Advaita Vedaanta, viz., *apavaada*, more than ever before. *Apavaada* consists in the elimination of what some is not, in order that one may attain the truth about that particular thing. In other words, it is "the elimination of the falsely superimposed attributes (*vivartha*) in order to discover the true nature of a thing."[111] The rope appears as a snake in an illusion. By negating the illusory snake the true nature of the rope is perceived. By negating the attributes of the illusory water in the mirage one discovers the true nature of the desert. By negating the illusory silver that we obtain the true nature of shells scattered on the beach. This ability to distinguish between the real and the unreal, Shankara calls discrimination. It is this discriminating ability that helps us to understand the true nature of things. It is much the same with our knowledge of *Brahman*. By negating, through discrimination, the attributes of the non-self, one attains the true nature of *Aatman* and by negating the world of names and forms one attains the knowledge of *Brahman*, the absolute reality.[112]

Negation, then, consists in the refutation of the knowledge established by the method of superimposition (*adhyaropa*). In the scriptures we find many statements about the ultimate reality, expressed in terms of negation. "That which is invisible (*adneesya*), ungraspable (*agranya*), without family (*agootra*), without caste (*avarna*), without sight or

hearing (*acaksisrotra*), without hand or foot (*apanipaada*), immortal (*nitya*) . . . imperishable(*avyaaya*)"[113] is *Brahman*. "The self is that which has been desired as neither, this nor that."[114] "It (*Brahman*) is imperishable . . ., undecaying . . ., unattached . . ., unsettled. It never feels pain, never suffers injury, it is transcendent."[115] These passages from the scripture witness to the fact that these negated qualities like birth, death, hunger, thirst, pain and pleasure never did belong to the absolute *Brahman*, even though these were attributes given to *Brahman*, by one in the state of ignorance. Neither do these superimposed qualities affect the ultimate reality in any way. Thus, the "*via negativa* of Advaita Vedaanta . . . safeguards the unqualified oneness of the state of being called *Brahman*."[116]

Brihadaaranyaka Upanishads speaks of *Brahman* with words `*neti neti*' (not so, not so).[117] In fact this statement does not make us perceive something direct as the statement `this is a book' make us perceive a book. Therefore, the statement `*neti neti*' does not tell us anything positive about the nature of *Brahman*. But, in fact, it is the most proper way of describing *Brahman* since it is devoid of all qualities. The term `*neti*' consists of two words, namely, `*ne*' which means `not' and `*iti*' which means `so'. The word `*iti*' indicates the presence of something or a quality right here, which is negated by the word `*ne*'. Thus, `*iti*' used with `*ne*' points to something that is negated. The repetition of `*neti*' twice covers all possible predications that are to be eliminated.[118] The statement `*neti neti*' only denies the attributes superimposed on *Brahman*, but not the *Brahman*, for such denial of both *Brahman* and the qualities superimposed on *Brahman* would lead to pure void (*suunya*) and to Nihilism (*Suunyavaada*). For Shankara says, "know . . . that the *Sruti* `not large' etc. is meant to negate the false superimposition (of largeness, smallness, etc., on the self) as it would be description of void if it were meant to negate those qualities from one other than the self."[119] Just as the denial of the illusion of the snake leaves us with the reality of the rope, so too the denial of the qualities superimposed on *Brahman* reveals *Brahman* in its entirety. For according to Shankara `*neti neti*' denies not absolutely everything, but everything except *Brahman*.[120]

At the same time the use of `*neti neti*' before a descriptive sentence does not necessarily mean that the particular descriptive sentence in question is false, but rather it only means that the sentence is not applicable or not appropriate in the case of *Brahman*. Consequently what this approach has done is to have generated a third kind of connotation which one can make of descriptions. No longer are descriptions either true or false; some of them may be a third kind of evaluation, namely, what had been termed `inappropriate' or `inapplicable'.[121]

Some times in scriptural passages we find twofold negation.[122] In statements like *Brahman* is "not known and beyond unknown"[123] and "neither gross nor subtle"[124] what is denied is not only one attribute but also its opposite. Shankara comments on the statement, which describes *Brahman* as "neither *sat* (existent) nor *asat* (non-existent)"[125] as follows. He says "since the Knowable (*Brahman / Aatman*) is beyond the reach of the senses . . . it cannot be . . . an object of consciousness accompanied with the idea of either existence or of non-existence, and therefore, not said to be *sat* or *asat*."[126] It is clear from this comment of Shankara that in all such negations, the notion of *sat* or *asat* are understood form the

vyayahaara, and not *paramaartha* point of view. From the supreme point of view of absolute knowledge, the term `*sat*' applies only to *Brahman*. But it is quite natural that one understands, in the course of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, such terms as `*sat*' or`*asat*' in the ordinary meaning, they have for those who are still immersed in ignorance. In that case what the aspirant understands by `*sat*' primarily is the object of senses, which should be negated with respect to *Brahman*.[127] Thus, the negative method completely does away with all false attribution of *Brahman*, and thereby paves the way for true knowledge.

Now that we have analyzed the meaning of negative method (*apavaada*) used by the aspirant in the stage of *manaana*, we could go on to give a few illustrations of this method and de-superimpose the superimposed phenomenal qualities on *Brahman* in the next section.

3.2.3.2.3. Illustrations of the Negative Method

Here, we attempt at two illustrations, in which the negative method is used to de-superimpose *Brahman*, the universal spirit and *Aatman* the inner spirit in man. The twofold de-superimposition process clearly points to the identity between the universal spirit and the inner self. These illustrations also would give us an understanding of what an aspirant is expected to do in the state of *manaana*, viz., that he is called to form right convictions about the true nature of *Brahman* and *Aatman* by way of de-superimposition.

We find the first illustration in the Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad. It is a regress to *Brahman* by way of negation. Gaargii, the daughter of Vacaknavii questions Yaajnavalkya regarding the nature of *Brahman*. She begins from her experience of the phenomenal world, and moves towards *Brahman*, and at each stage Yaajnavalkya uses negative method to counter her question. Her question proceeds as follows. Since the world is woven on water, on what the water woven? Yaajnavalkya replies that it is on the wind that the water is woven. She asks further: `On what the wind is woven?' to which the reply given is that the wind is woven by the atmosphere worlds. To her question `on what the atmosphere worlds woven?' Yaajnavalkya replies that they are woven by the worlds of the Gandharvas. To her plea `on what the worlds of the Gandharvas woven?' he answers that they are woven by the worlds of the sun. `On what the worlds of the sun woven? She asks and the reply is that the worlds of the sun are woven by the worlds of the moon. She questions him further saying `on what the worlds of the moon woven?' and he replies that they are woven by the worlds of the stars. To her inquiry `on what the worlds of the stars woven?' Yaajnavalkya replies that they are woven by the worlds of gods. She questions him again `on what the worlds of gods woven?' and he satisfies her curiosity by saying that the worlds of the gods are woven in the worlds of Indra. To her question `on what the worlds of Indra woven?' he says that they are woven on the worlds of Prajaapathi. Again she asks `on what the worlds of Prajaapathi woven?' and he replies that the worlds of Prajaapathi are woven in the worlds of *Brahman*. Gaargii persists in her questioning and asks `on what the worlds of *Brahman* woven? Yaajnavalkya replies, "Gaargii, do not question too much, lest your head fall off. In truth you are questioning too much about a divinity about which further questions cannot be asked. Gaargii do not over-question."[128] Thus, Yaajnavalkya using the method of

negation moves towards *Brahman* eliminating all adjuncts of limitation (*upaadhi*) starting from the lowest.

The second illustration of negative method is given in Sadaananda Yogindra's book *Vedaantasaara*.[129] Here the author attempts to de-superimpose the superimposed inner self (*Aatman*), by bringing together different views held regarding the nature of the self. Each succeeding view is more refined than the preceding one as the former attempts to identify the self with higher faculties, while the latter identifies the self with lower faculties. In setting forth each of these views the author presents the threefold proofs, viz., the scriptural evidence, inference and direct perception, given by the respective schools to justify its view of the self. At the end the author refutes all these fallacious views and sets forth the true nature of *Aatman* as taught by Vedaanta.

The first view represents the view of the most deluded common man, who identifies his self with an extraneous object like his son. The three reasons given in justification for this false identification are the following. The scriptural statement `Verily the self is born as the son", the inferential fact that one loves one's son as one's own self and the experiential fact that one feels oneself prosperous or ruined according to one's son fares well or ill in life. This view of the self cannot be justified because one's self can never be his son, even though the son is very dear to oneself.[130]

Four different schools of Indian Materialism (Chaarvaakas) propound the next four views. The first school holds that the self is the physical body. They quote the *Sruti* statement "Man is constituted of the essence of food" as the scriptural evidence. From the fact that a person saves himself from a burning house, even leaving his son behind, they point out that a person's self is his body, which he wishes to save. The perceptual experience of oneself as `I am thin', `I am short', etc. also helps one to identify oneself with one's body. The second school of Materialism refutes the contention of the former school that body is the self by arguing that body become inert and inactive when sense organs cease to function. Therefore, for them the sense organs is the self. The quote the scriptural passage `The sense organs went to their father prajaapathi and said . . ." , to justify their point of view. They infer that senses are the self from the fact that the movement of the body ceases to exist when sense organs cease to work. One's perceptual experience that `I am blind of one eye' and `I am deaf' clearly points to the fact that one's self is the sense organs.[131] The third school argues against the previous school by saying that the activities of the senses are dependent on the vital force (*praana*). Therefore, for them vital force is the self. They give the scriptural passage "Different from and more internal than this (the physical body) is the self, which consists in vital force", to substantiate their view. From the fact that the cessation of the vital force leads to the cessation of activity of the sense organs, they infer that vital force is the self. The perceptual evidence that `I am hungry' and `I am thirsty' which are associated with vital force, also indicate that the activity of the body and the senses depend on the vital force, and so it is identical with the self. [132] The proponents of the fourth school of Materialism rebut the arguments of the third school on the ground that the activity of the vital force is controlled by the activity of the mind (*manas*). Thus for them mind is identical with the self. The *Sruti* passage they use to support their claim is that which says: "Different from and more internal than this (which consists of the vital

force) is the self which consists of the mind." From the fact that vital force ceases to exist when the mind stops functioning they conclude that the mind is the self. Besides, the perceptual experience of `I am considering the pros and corns', also indicate that the mind, which has the capacity for weighing over the subject, is identical with the self.[133]

The Buddhist Idealists (Yogaachaaras) contradict the view of the last school of Materialism. Since they consider the mind as a mere instrument of pleasure and pain, and that weighs the pros and corns, it needs an agent to act. This agent that controls the mind and acts on its behalf is the intellect (*buddhi*). Thus, for the Buddhist Idealists, the intellect, the agent of activity is the self. The scriptural passage they use to support their view is the following: "Different from and more internal than this is the self, which consists of consciousness." From the fact that mind as an instrument of judging becomes powerless at the absence of the agent intellect, they infer that *buddhi* is the self. Besides, the perceptual knowledge expressed in statements, such as `I am the agent' and `I am the enjoyer', also indicate that the intellect is the self.[134]

The exponents of Miimaamsa schools of Praabhaakara and Kumaarila Bhatta held the next two views regarding the nature of the self. The Praabhaakaras refute the view of the Yogaachaaras saying that the intellect cannot be the self, as in the state of deep sleep the intellect and all other faculties merge in ignorance. Thus, for the Praabhaakaras the ignorance, that characterizes the state of deep sleep, is the self. They substantiate this view with the help of the scriptural passage, "Different from and more internal than this [intellect] is the self which consists in bliss." From the fact that in deep sleep the body, the vital forces, the mind and the intellect merges in ignorance, they infer that ignorance is the self. The perceptual experience of one as `I am ignorant' and `I am devoid of knowledge' clearly points to the fact ignorance is the self. Thus for Praabhaakaras, as there is no consciousness in the state of deep sleep, it follows that the state of ignorance is the self. [135] The Bhattas deny the view of the Praabhaakaras, viz., the ignorance is the self, on the ground that the in the state of deep sleep a person contains elements of both consciousness and unconsciousness. Therefore, they claim that consciousness associated with ignorance is the self. Thus, for them, self is associated with knowledge and ignorance, consciousness and unconsciousness. They quote the scriptural statement "During dreamless sleep the *Aatman* is undifferentiated consciousness", to substantiate their view. They also infer this truth from the fact that both consciousness and unconsciousness are present in the state of dreamless sleep. They explain this point as follows. Unless a man retains consciousness in the state of deep sleep, he cannot say on waking that he had slept well, because in deep sleep sense organs do not function and this knowledge that he had slept well cannot come from sense organs. Therefore the self must possess consciousness as an inherent quality. At the same time there is also unconsciousness in the state of deep sleep, as one who goes through the experience of deep sleep fully unaware of what had happened during the period of sleep. Thus the Bhattas infer that the self is consciousness associated with ignorance. The perceptual experiences of `I had a sound sleep' and `I did not know anything then, i.e., at the time of sleep' also indicate that consciousness associated with ignorance is the self.[136]

The Maadhyamika school of Buddhism (Suunyavaadins), interpreting the sayings of Buddha literally maintain that void is the self. They refute the Bhatta view, by saying that the self is neither consciousness, nor unconsciousness, but non-existence. They state the scriptural statement "In the beginning there was non-existence", in favor of their philosophical point. From the fact that there is an absence of everything in the state of deep sleep, they infer that there is nothing called self and that the reality is void. They prove this point also from the perceptual experience of a man who has just awakened from deep sleep, which makes him say that `during the dreamless sleep I was non-existent'.[137]

All these eight different views of the self, present the self as one's son, one's body, one's vital force, one's mind, one's intellect, ignorance, consciousness associated with ignorance and non-existence. Each of these successive views negates the former by identifying the self with something higher than the previous knowledge of the self. So far eight fold negations have been made. The author of the book of *Vedaantasaara* states that all these negations have moved in the right direction, but they have not taken us to the true nature of the self. Having said this he makes an attempt to show the true nature of the self, by rebutting the arguments of these various schools.[138] To quote him:

> Since all these fallacious citations of scriptural passages, arguments and personal experiences, made by the different classes of people enumerated above beginning with the extremely deluded [common man's view of identifying his son with the self], in support of their respective views about the self, the subsequent view contradicts the previous one, it becomes quite clear that all these items from the son to void are not the self. Moreover none of the items from son to void is the self, because all those fallacious citations of scriptural passages, arguments and personal experiences in support of them are all nullified for the following reasons: first because they contradict strong scriptural passages which describe the self as not gross, without eyes, without vital force, without mind, not an agent, but consciousness, pure intelligence and existence; secondly because they are material and are illumined by pure consciousness and as such are unreal, like a pot, etc.; and lastly because of the strong intuition of the man of realization that he is *Brahman*. Therefore, the innermost consciousness which by nature eternal, pure, intelligent, free and real, and which is the illuminer of those unreal entities . . . [such as son, body, vital force, mind, intellect, ignorance, consciousness associated with ignorance and void] is the self. This is the experience of the Vedaantist.[139]

This passage quoted from *Vedaantasaara*, clearly states the true nature of *Aatman*, by way of the method of negation, in the process giving us a clear illustration of negation as a method to attain the knowledge of the absolute reality.

Thus, in the state of *manaana* the aspirant de-superimposes, by way of negation, the phenomenal reality from *Brahman* and *Aatman*, and understands the full import of the Vedaantic statements like `That art Thou', in their indirect and implicit meaning. *Manaana*, therefore, logically establishes the truth of identity, by critical reflection and discourse.[140]

At the end of the stage of reflection all ignorance is removed, the aspirant is intellectually convinced of the identity of *Brahman* with *Aatman*, and thus, moves towards the next stage, viz., the practice of meditation.

3.2.3.3. Meditation

In this section we will briefly analyze the meaning and types of meditation. Besides, we will make an attempt to explain the practice of meditation, by aspirant's concentration on the *mahaavaakyas* and the eternal syllable `*Aum*'.

3.2.3.3.1. Meaning of Meditation

The final stage leading to the complete removal of ignorance and thus, to the direct realization of the self is meditation (*nididhyaasana*). If an aspirant, having heard the teacher, is successful in his reflection and is intellectually convinced of his identity with *Brahman*, then he is ready to strive for the direct realization or *Brahmaanubhava*. *Nididhyaasana* is a mental activity consisting in withdrawing the mind from all other things and concentrating it on *Brahman*.[141] It "strikes deep the Vedaantic wisdom into our heart. It eradicates the innate confusion of the body with the soul."[142] Meditation is not a concentration of oneself on *Brahman*, as an external of separate entity. It is an activity of the mind "in which the mind is turned completely inward, and is firmly. fixed on the inner self and its identity with *Brahman* till one's finitude and individuality is dissolved."[143]

Thus, "meditation is the stream of ideas of the same kind as those of *Brahman*, the one without a second, to the exclusion of such ideas as those of body"[144] and all other faculties related to the physical, psychical and intellectual dimensions of an individual. Hence, meditation involves a continuous and unbroken thought on *Brahman*, that flows like a line of flowing oil,[145] and the exclusion of all thoughts. For Shankara, therefore, meditation consists in "remaining independent of everything as a result of the unassailable thought `I am verily *Brahman*' . . . and [which] is productive of supreme bliss."[146] Now that we have analyzed the meaning of meditation, we could talk about its different types in the next section.

3.2.3.3.2. Types of Meditation

Nididhyaasana has two forms, viz., *samprajnaat-samaapatti* and *asamprajnaat-samaapatti*. *Samprajnaat-samaapatti* is a form of meditation in which the aspirant experiences modifications of consciousness while meditating on the *mahaavaakyas*. In this type of meditation there are two stages. The initial stage is characterized by the knowledge of the modification of mental consciousness that originated while meditating on the Vedaantic statements. The aspirant, therefore, is conscious of himself, the meditator and the witness of the modification that has taken place in the consciousness, and of the modification created by the meditation on the scriptural axiom at that particular moment. The later stage of *samprajnaat-samaapatti* is free from all thoughts regarding the origin of the modification that is produced in the consciousness, as the result of meditation on the *mahaavaakya*. Since meditation is intense at this stage, the temporal and spatial marks of

modifications are not available to the consciousness of the meditator. The aspirant is only aware of himself as the witness and the modifications produced by his meditation on the Vedaantic aphorisms.[147]

Asamprajnaat-samaapatti is a state of meditation, in which the consciousness of the aspirant practicing meditation is not characterized by any modifications. In it, there is no sense of duality as all modifications produced by the meditation, on the scriptural axiom, have ceased to exist. As there is no subject-object distinction in this meditation, the *Aatman* becomes the subject and object of the meditation as the identity without any modifications is arrived at as the result of *asamprajnaat-samaapatti*.[148]

We have looked into the meaning and types of meditation in the last two sections. In the next section, we move on to consider the practice of meditation with the help of the four *mahaavaakyas* and the eternal syllable `*Aum*'.

3.2.3.3.3. Practice of Meditation

In the states of *sravana* and *manaana* the aspirant studies the scriptures, analyses the meaning of the Vedaantic aphorisms and discriminates the perishable body, mind, intellect and plurality of the world from the imperishable self. Having done this, the aspirant negates the perishable world and asserts the imperishable self as real, repeatedly suggesting to himself that "I am supreme *Brahman*".[149] The latter task of assertion is done by the practice of meditation, which takes the aspirant to experience the fundamental identity of *Aatman* and *Brahman*. The practice of meditation is facilitated by the aspirant's focus on the four *mahaavaakyas* and the eternal syllable `*Aum*, while meditating.

The aspirant's practice of meditation on the *mahaavaakyas* must begin with the *lakshana vaakya* (statement of definition), viz., `*Prajnaanam Brahmaa*' (`Consciousness is *Brahman*'). This aphorism fixes the mind of the meditator on the thought that consciousness in the individual (*Aatman*) and the consciousness underlying the entire universe (*Brahman*) are one and the same. In other words, meditating on this aphorism the aspirant recognizes existentially that the same consciousness is the substratum of the microcosm and the macrocosm. Thus, the meditation on the statement `Consciousness if *Brahman*' envelops the depth of the aspirant with the experience that the consciousness ever remains the one homogeneous reality whether it be in the cosmos or in the individual. With the deep awareness of the oneness of the ultimate reality, the aspirant moves on to the meditation of the *upadeesha vaakya* (statement of advice), viz., `*Tat Tvam Asi* (`That art Thou'). It asserts that the one ultimate reality (That) is the pure self (Thou) that is the core of one's personality that lies beyond the five sheaths (*koshas*) of matter. In this manner the meditation on the second *mahaavaakya* makes the aspirant experience the oneness of the infinite *Brahman* and *Aatman* within him. Having convinced that the supreme reality is nothing but his own self, the aspirant moves on to the meditation of the *abyhaasa vaakya* (statement of practice), viz., `*Ayamaatama Brahmaa*' (`This Self is *Brahman*). The meditation on this practical formula makes the aspirant realize *Aatman*, which activates him is the same *Brahman*, who vitalizes the entire universe. Thus, the aspirant discovers the identity between the self and the all-pervading *Brahman*. The conviction arrived at by

the meditation on the third *mahaavaakya* makes the aspirant experience the truth of *anubhava vaakya* (statement of experience), viz., `*Aham Brahmaasmi*' (`I am *Brahman*'). This statement is a pronouncement of the man of realization. He knows now experientially that he is the all-pervading *Brahman* and that all the duality is totally removed. The `I' referred to in the fourth *mahaavaakya* is different from the `I' experienced in the waking state, dream state and the state of deep sleep. The `I' of the *anubhava vaakya* is the supreme self, identical with *Brahman*. In this manner the practice of meditation facilitated by the *mahaavaakyas* lead to self-realization.[150]

Besides meditating on the *mahaavaakyas*, the aspirant must attempt to focus his attention on the eternal syllable `*Aum*', while practicing meditation. The meditation on `*Aum*' would remove all traces of ignorance and lead the aspirant to the gates of true knowledge. Maanduukya Upanishad refers to the significance of the eternal syllable `*Aum*' as follows: "*Aum*, this syllable is all this. . . . All that is past, the present and the future, all this is only the syllable`*Aum*'. And whatever else there is beyond the three fold time, that too is the only syllable `*Aum*'."[151] This passage from the Maanduukya Upanishad clearly states that `*Aum*' refers to both the manifested and the unmanifested *Brahman*.

The ultimate and unmanifested *Brahman*, the pure consciousness, though one in itself, by the activity of cosmic and individual *maayaa*, in the temporal order appears as Viraat, *Hirayanagarbha* and *Iishvara* in the macrocosm; and *Vishva*, *Taijasa* and *Praajna* in the microcosm.[152] Thus, `*Aum*' refers to the manifested *Brahman* conditioned by the three fold states both in the macrocosm and the microcosm. Therefore, the three sound elements of the syllable `*Aum*' corresponds to and signifies *Brahman* conditioned by the three bodies (viz., the gross, subtle and causal bodies) and manifesting in the three states (viz., the waking state, the dream-state and the deep sleep state). So Shankara maintains that the sound `*A*' of the syllable `*Aum*' signifies *Viraat* in the macrocosm and *Vishva* in the microcosm; the sound `*U*' of the syllable `*Aum*' represents *Hirayanagarbha* and *Taijasa*; and the sound `*M*' of the syllable `*Aum*' indicates the *Iishvara* and *Praajna*.[153] In meditation the aspirant attempts to inculcate the corresponding relationship between different sound of the syllable `*Aum*' and the respective pairs of macrocosmic and microcosmic realms. In doing so, he is encouraged to dismiss consciously the differences between *Viraat* and *Vishva*, *Hirayanagarbha* and *Taijasa*, and *Iishvara* and *Praajna*, and apprehend these pairs as identical.[154] To quote Sureshvaraachaarya on this point: "The three forms, *Vishva*, *Taijasa* and *Praajna* must be contemplated as identical with *Viraat*, *Suutraatmaa* [*Hirayanagarbha*] and *Akshara* [*Iishvara*] respectively, so that the non-existence of the difference of those entities may be established."[155] Thus the three individual forms of consciousness become identical with the three collective forms of consciousness, and so only the latter remains in place of the six.[156] When a seeker practices this identification of the macrocosmic and microcosmic states, by way of meditation he would experience, the three sounds of the syllable `*Aum*', viz., `*A*', `*U*' and `*M*', as signifying the three phases of the one integral spirit, i.e., *Brahman*.[157] Thus, the whole universe would be seen as the ultimate reality, in relation to the waking consciousness, dream consciousness and deep-sleep consciousness conditioned by the gross body, the subtle body and causal body respectively.[158]

Even at this stage the aspirant of self-realization has two fold problems, viz., a philosophical and a spiritual. The philosophical problem consists in understanding the ultimate *Brahman* as transcending the conditions in which it is seemingly embodied. The spiritual problem is to raise oneself from the limiting conditions of the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body and to realize one's identity with the ultimate *Brahman*. In order to overcome these two problems and arrive at the identity experience, the aspirant must learn to move, both intellectually and spiritually, from the entanglements with the different bodies in different states of existence. This involves an ascending movement form the gross body in the waking level to the level of subtle body in the dream level and from the dream level to the deep-sleep level of the causal body. Constant meditation on the different sounds of the syllable `*Aum*', viz., `*A*',`*U*' and `*M*', would bring about this upward movement towards the realization of *Brahman*.[159]

The first sound that is constitutive of `*Aum*', `*A*' represents the gross point of view of reality. Philosophically it refers to the naïve realism and the pluralism of common sense. The aspirant must move from this pluralistic perspective of reality and from entanglement with the gross things that characterize his life in the waking state. He must move towards the level of thought that is marked by subtle bodies that are characteristic of dream state. This state is represented by the sound `*U*' of `*Aum*'. Philosophically the thought belongs to this level is dynamic idealism, which sees the universe as the projection of the spirit, just as the dream state is the projection of the mind. Thus, one realizes at this state that the phenomenal reality is the manifestation of *Brahman*, by the instrumentality of *maayaa*. This state is as unreal as the waking state. When an aspirant attains maturity in this level, he must move onto the third level of the state of deep sleep that is characterized by causal body and ignorance. This state is represented by the final sound of `*Aum*', viz., the `*M*'. The philosophy of state of deep sleep is agnosticism, as in this state ignorance the seed of phenomenal existence is present in a striking manner. As an aspirant meditates on the `*M*' sound of `*Aum*', he must break the agnosticism of the deep sleep state and experience the totality of the eternal syllable `*Aum*', which is fundamentally and essentially the unmanifest *Brahman*. Thus, meditating on the three sounds of the syllable `*Aum*', the aspirant gradually recognizes the unreality of the waking state with the gross body, the dream-state with the subtle body and the deep sleep-state with the causal body. In this manner, he wakes up to the infinite reality of his spiritual essence in the experience of the eternal syllable `*Aum*'. Moving out of the three stages of ignorance, the aspirant achieves absolute illumination, which makes him experience his divine essence as the absolute *Brahman* in the `stateless' eternity.[160] Shankara in his work *Panchiikaranam* sums up the experience of the aspirant attaining self-realization by meditation on the eternal syllable `*Aum*' as follows:

> Now `*A*' the waking personality should be resolved into `*U*', the dream personality, and the `*U*' into `*M*', i.e., the deep-sleep personality. Again the `*M*' should be reduced into `*Aum*' and the `*Aum*' into "I". I am, the *Aatman*, the Witness of all, the absolute, of the nature of pure consciousness; I am neither nescience nor even its effect but I am *Brahman* alone, Eternally Pure, Ever Enlightened, Eternally Free, and Existence Absolute. I am the Bliss Absolute, One without a second and the Innermost Consciousness.[161]

Sureshvaraachaarya commenting on this passage from Shankara's *Panchiikaranam*, says as follows:

> The waking personality of *Vishva* [- *Viraat*], symbolized by `*A*' must be resolved into `*U*' (i.e., the dream personality). The subtle radiant personality of the dream, the `*Taijasa*' [- *Hirayanagarbha*], symbolized by `*U*' must be merged into `*M*' (i.e., the personality of the deep sleep). Again the *Praajna* [- *Iishvara*], that deep sleep consciousness symbolized by `*M*' and which is the causal personality must be finally reduced to *Aatman*, of the nature of Pure Consciousness.[162]

Such meditation on the eternal syllable `*Aum*', in which the aspirant dissolves and reduces the lower on the higher and finally everything in *Brahman*, the absolute self is traditionally known as *Lai Upaasana* or *Ahangrah Upaasana*.[163] Along with the meditation on the *mahaavaakyas* the *Lai Upaasana* is an excellent way of practicing meditation, which would lead to the dawn of knowledge, when the seeker experiences identity between the *Brahman* and the *Aatman*.

Thus, by repeated exercise of meditation one moves to greater depth of absolute consciousness. This consciousness of identity with the absolute *Brahman* removes all the effects of ignorance. By focusing more on the inner self, by way of meditation the aspirant makes the inward journey, until he experiences his absolute identity with *Brahman*.

3.3. RELEASE: THE END OF THE PATH

In the last two sections of this chapter, we considered the nature and methods of *Brahmaajijnaasa* and the various stages of Shankara's *jnaana* path to self-realization. The preparations the aspirant makes in the physical, moral and intellectual levels, helps him focus more on the inner nature, wherein he finds the ultimate source of his existence. The end of this journey is the attainment of release (*Samaadhi*). In this section, we make an attempt to elaborate the nature of the state of *Samaadhi* and its goal, viz., the emergence of the realized man (*Brahmajnaani*)

3.3.1. Nature of *Samaadhi*

In this section, we make an attempt to analyze the meaning of the state of release. Besides, we would briefly mention the different types of *Samaadhi* and the obstacles the seeker has to overcome in order to attain this state, the final goal of human existence.

3.3.1.1. Meaning of *Samaadhi*

The realization of one's absorption in or identity with *Brahman* is release (*Samaadhi*). It is the true liberation and the ultimate end of the seeker. This state of self-realization is of the same nature of *Brahman*. Therefore, *Brahman* and *Samaadhi* are identical. Liberation is nothing else, but becoming one with *Brahman*. In the liberated state the seeker knows that he is *Brahman*. As a result, all duality and multiplicity disappear. One knows now that all,

including his self is *Brahman*. In *Samaadhi*, nothing new is attained in the aspirant, for he only realizes what he is from all eternity.[164]

Speaking of the state of release Shankara says: "The complete forgetfulness of all thought, by first making it changeless and then identifying it with *Brahman* is called *Samaadhi*, known also as knowledge."[165] By this statement Shankara does not say that release is a state of unconsciousness. Even though all objective thoughts are absent in *Samaadhi*, the pure consciousness is always there. To deny the presence of consciousness at this state is an impossibility, as it is the very self of the person, who denies it. Since the very attempt to deny the presence of the consciousness at the state of release would affirm the reality of consciousness, this state can be rightly called knowledge.[166] From what we have said, it is clear that *Samaadhi* is different from the state of deep sleep. It is true that mental states or object-thoughts do not appear both in *Samaadhi* and in deep sleep. But the fundamental difference between the two consists in that in *Samaadhi* the mental state exists having taken the form of *Brahman*, while in deep sleep the mental state is totally absent, as it has merged with ignorance which alone remains. Thus, the state of release is different from and essentially superior to the state of deep sleep.[167]

According to Shankara, the realization of *Samaadhi* takes place in three stages of consciousness. The first stage is *asmbhaava-bhaavana*. It consists in the removal of thought of non-existence of *Brahman*, when one hears that `*Brahman*, as undivided consciousness, exists'. The second stage is *drishyamaarjnaana*. Here, the discriminative capacity is more advanced and one is able to penetrate the appearance to get into the essence of reality. Now, one is able to remove the *avidhyaa* that everything is material and become conscious of the immutable *Brahman*. At these stages, the knowledge is only indirect, mediate and based on subject-object distinction. The third stage is that of identity-consciousness. At this stage, the seeker experiences the deepest core of his being that *Aatman* is identical with *Brahman*, the ultimate source behind the universe. In the process, all ignorance about the illusory nature of the phenomenal reality is removed. This final stage gives us direct knowledge of *Brahman*.[168] Commenting on these three stages of consciousness Mahendranath Sircar says:

> The first stage marks out the origin and continuity of *vritti*, the second, its final disappearance, the third is the stage of knowledge. Between the second stage and the expression of *Aatman* in the third, if we can speak in such a way, there is no sequence of time. They are simultaneous. ÿ*Aatman* is known only by implication as one invariably associated with the denial of illusory forms of *avidhyaa* and of *avidhyaa* itself.[169]

According to Vedaantins there is a difference between the perception of *Brahman* in *Brahmaanubhava* and the perception of concrete facts in the phenomenal existence. In the perception of concrete things, the mind goes out and takes on itself the determination of the object. Here, the perceiver become aware of the existence of the object, because of the fact that mind takes the form of the object, and thereby removes the perceiver's concrete ignorance about the object. If we take the example of the pot as the object of consciousness, it is known because the mind goes out through the senses and takes on itself the form of the

pot. This modification of the mind removes the ignorance about the pot. As a result, consciousness expresses the object. This process is technically known as *falavaapya*. But in the perception of *Brahman* in *Samaadhi* is very different. In it, the mind does not take any concrete form, as *Brahman* has no form. *Brahman*-experience in *Samaadhi* is *vrittivaapya*. So the mind does not go out to experience *Brahman*, but rather it is transformed into *Brahman*, putting an end to all forms of ignorance.[170] Since we have clarified the meaning of the state of release, we could analyze its different types in the next section.

3.3.1.2. Types of *Samaadhi*

The later Advaitic writers speak of two types of *Samaadhi* depending on the nature and intensity of concentration. They are determinate absorption (*Savikalpa Samaadhi*) and indeterminate absorption (*Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*). In determinate absorption the aspirant abides in *Brahman*, but still retains his `I-consciousness'. Here, there exists the distinction between `the knower', `the known' and `the knowledge'. "Absorption attended with self-consciousness (*Savikalpa Samaadhi*) is that in which the mental state taking the form of *Brahman*, the One without a second, rests on It, but without merging of the distinction of the knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge."[171] Thus, determinate absorption is a state of *Brahman*-experience, in which the mind assumes the form of *Brahman* and rests on it with the distinction between subject and object still persisting. In other words, though the mind of seeker abides in *Brahman*, the contemplative faculty has not merged into the final witness, i.e., the absolute *Aatman* and as a result the three fold division of meditation, meditated and meditator, still persists in the seeker's mind in *Savikalpa Samaadhi*.[172] Thus, in determinate absorption the knowledge of absolute *Brahman* manifests itself, in spite of the fact that the consciousness is relative. The later Advaitins compare this state to one who possesses knowledge of both clay elephant and the clay that permeates the elephant. In this state, therefore, both the phenomenon and the noumenon (absolute substratum) are present before the seeker's mind, and the absolute reality peeps through the vestige of name and form. In other words, in the *Savikalpa Samaadhi* the seeker is already possessed by the truth, but still unable to realize it entirely.[173]

Nirvikalpa Samaadhi (indeterminate absorption) is the total absorption into *Brahman*. When an aspirant, having practiced *Savikalpa Samaadhi* for a long period of time, loses the sense of duality of the subject and the object altogether and becomes one with *Brahman*, he is said to have attained the state of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*. It is an "absorption without self consciousness . . . [and it consists in] the total mergence in *Brahman*, the One without a second, of the mental state which has assumed Its form, the distinction of knower, knowledge, and the object of knowledge being in this case obliterated."[174] In this state, the contemplative faculty itself is totally dissolved into *Brahman*. As a result all distinctions between meditation, meditated and the meditator totally disappears and there remains only the eternal self. "Just as when salt has been dissolved in water it is no longer perceived separately, and the water alone remains, similarly the mental state that has assumed the form of *Brahman*, the One without a second, is no longer perceived, and only the self remains."[175] Thus, in this state there is no `I-consciousness' and no subject-object duality, as the meditative faculty is totally merged in *Brahman*. The *Panchiikarana-Vaarttikam* of Sureshvaraachaarya states about the *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi* as follows:

> When the contemplative mind is merged into *Aatman*, the Pure Consciousness, then it should not be disturbed. One should remain as that Infinite Consciousness like the full and motionless motion. Thus attaining perfect absorption through constant practice, an aspirant endowed with faith and devotion and having overcome the senses and anger perceives (realizes) the *Aatman*, One without a second.[176]

Thus, in the state of *Nirvikapa Samaadhi*, *Brahman*, the ultimate self shines by its own radiance. The aspirant having totally dissolved everything in *Brahman* experiences his absolute and total identity with *Brahman*.[177]

In order to attain the state of spiritual absorption in *Nirvikalpa Sammadhi*, the aspirant must attempt to overcome a number of obstacles. To quote Shankara: "While practicing [*Nirvikalpa*] *Samaadhi* there appears unavoidably many obstacles, such as lack of inquiry, idleness, desire for sense pleasure, dullness, distraction, tasting of joy and sense of blankness. One desiring the knowledge of *Brahman* should slowly get rid of such innumerable obstacles."[178] Advaitins speak of four obstacles that an aspirant must work on in order that the state of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi* is achieved. They are torpidity (*laya*), distraction (*vikshepa*), attachment (*kashaaya*) and enjoyment (*rasaavaada*).[179] Torpidity consists in the lapse of mental state into sleep or a sense of blankness because of one's failure to rest on the absolute. It is the result of laziness and fatigue in the aspirant.[180] Distraction is the resting of one's mental state on things other than the absolute *Brahman*. It happens due to the lack of concentration on the part of the aspirant. When he fails to focus his entire attention to rest on *Braahman*, he is distracted.[181] Attachment is the failure of one's mind to rest on the absolute *Brahman* due to the re-experiencing of the impressions (*vaasanas*) of sense pleasures experienced earlier. Even when there is no torpidity or distraction and everything seems to be calm, attachment can torment an aspirant, and as a result he will be prevented from fixing his mind on *Brahman*.[182] Enjoyment consists in the mind getting caught up in the state of bliss experienced by the seeker in the *Savikalpa Samaadhi*. As a result the aspirant is not able to rest the mind on *Brahman*. It can also happen when the aspirant enjoying the *Savikalpa Samaadhi*, having no inner strength to give up the bliss and to give himself to the practice of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi* with full mind and heart. In both the cases this feeling of enjoyment greatly hinders the spiritual progress of the aspirant, as he is unable to rest totally and fully on the absolute *Brahman* and thereby attain the *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*.[183]

When the mind of the aspirant is free from all these four obstacles, and rests fully in the absolute consciousness, just like a flame of a lamp sheltered from the wind,[184] he would be moving towards the state of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*. The aspirant is called to do the following in order that he can remove these obstacles. When his mind is torpid, he must arouse and awaken it. When he is distracted, by perseverance and renunciation bring his mind to a state of calmness. When the mind is attached to past experiences of pleasures, become aware of such impressions and direct the attention to the absolute *Brahman*. When the mind continues to linger on the spiritual enjoyment of the bliss of *Savikalpa Samaadhi*, get unattached through discrimination of the lower from the higher. When the aspirant experiences a state of mental equipoise, he must continue to remain in it, never attempting

to disturb himself from that state.[185] When an aspirant takes all these measures to overcome the obstacles, he would experience the absolute state of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*, where he experiences his self as totally identical with the absolute *Brahman*.

If we accept the distinction of the two different states in *Samaadhi*, as proposed by the later Advaitins, then, without any doubt the latter state, *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi* is the same as self-realization (*Brahmaanubhava*). Here, the absolute identity between the seeker and *Brahman* is realized. Such a realized seeker becomes a *Brahmajnaani*. The emergence of *Brahmajnaani* out of the aspirant of self-realization is the goal of the state of *Samaadhi*. In the next section we turn our attention to this topic.

3.3.2. Goal of Release: *Brahmajnaani*

When the state of release is attained, the seeker becomes a *Brahmajnaani*. Thus, the goal of the state of *Samaadhi* is the birth of the *Brahmajnaani*. In this section, we attempt to analyze the nature of *Brahmajnaani* and the two possible stages of his existence as the *Brahmajnaani*, viz., *Videhamukti* and *Jiivanmukti*. Besides, this section would elaborate the nature and characteristic of *Jiivanmukta*.

3.3.2.1. Nature and Stages of *Brahmajnaani's* Existence

Here, we highlight the nature of the existence of *Brahmajnaani* in a general way. Besides, we would look into the two possible stages of the existence of *Brahmajnaani*, i.e., *Videhamukti* and *Jiivanmukti*.

3.3.2.1.1. Nature of *Brahmajnaai's* Existence

Brahmajnaani is one who possesses the *jnaana* of *Brahman*. He is in the state of transcendental consciousness. He would be purely unconscious of the empirical order, as it would not affect him in any way. The phenomenal world, its variety of realities and their meanings no longer obstruct the vision of *Brahmajnaani*. His state of existence cannot be described in positive terms, as it surpasses any type of description. He is enlightened, free, fully unaffected by pains and gains of the phenomenal existence. In his innermost essence, he knows that he is that eternal consciousness, ultimate truth and bliss.[186] Thus, *Brahmajnaani* is a man-of-realization, who has realized his supreme self. He has given up all his thoughts, desires and their impressions (*vaasanas*), and has become his real self. Neither the material faculties of body, mind and intellect bind the *Brahmajnaai*, nor the three stages of existence, viz., the waking stage, the dream stage and the state of deep sleep limit his life, as they used to before the attainment of self-realization. *Brahmajnaani* has overcome all limitations of all these stages and the bodies associated with them, viz., the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body, respectively, and has become one with *Brahman*.[187]

Having crossed all these stages and reached the pinnacle of perfection, the *Brahmajnaani* knows the unreality of all these stages that marked his state of ignorance. He knows, now, that he is the eternal *Brahman*, pure consciousness and substratum of every phenomenal

existence and stages of existence. *Brahmajnaani* becomes the true witness of the microcosmic and macrocosmic stages of stages of existence, viz., *Vishva*, *Taijasa*, *Praajna*, *Viraat*, *Hirayanagarbha* and *Iishvara*. As a being-in-the-world, the man-of-realization experiences all these conditioned stages, but he remains unaffected by them as he knows that he is *Brahman*, and there is no more reality to be known.[188] "For him {*Brahmajnaani*] who sees the all-pervading *Aatman*, of the supreme peace and bliss and the sole reality there remains nothing more to be attained and nothing more to be known."[189] There is nothing more to be attained for the *Brahmajnaani*, as in knowing the bliss of *Brahman*, there is nothing achievable left behind. In the same way, there is nothing more to be known for the *Brahmajnaani*, as in knowing him to be *Brahman* nothing more remains to be known.[190] Thus, "a wise one [*Brahmajnaani*] attains the acme of life having nothing more to be achieved, and thus becomes eternally free although still living. With the whole of his mind and heart thoroughly filled with *Aatman*, he does not perceive this world."[191] *Brahmajnaai*, therefore, is one who has allowed all the pluralistic manifestations of the microcosm and the macrocosm to merge into his eternal self, which is identical with *Brahman*.[192]

Having looked into the nature of the *Brahmajnaani*, we could speak of the two stages of his existence in the following section.

3.3.2.1.2. Stages of *Brahmajnaani's* Existence

We can speak of two stages of the existence of *Brahmajnaai*. When *Brahmajnaani* reaches the transcendental peak of existence, he is called *Videhamukta* and his state is called *Videhamukti*. For the *Videhamukta*, the empirical world is not more a reality, as he has awakened to the new vision of existence in which every form of illusion is removed. *Videhamukta* is said to have attained *Videhakaivalya*, which involves freedom of being alone undisturbed, denial of the body and forsaking of future life. In this state, the *karamic* seeds that leads to future births have been destroyed, by the clear vision of identity. The effects of past *karma* have been obliterated. As a result, there is no reason for the individual to continue living in the phenomenal world. *Videhamukta* passes into a calm existence, having lost to the empirical world and shedding his artificial personality that is characteristic of the *jiiva*. Such a state is identical with the dawn of knowledge about *Brahman*.[193] Thus, *Videhamukta* reaches the state of complete liberation (*kaivalya*) from which there is no return, as *karmic* forces are totally obliterated."[194]

Shankara is of the opinion that *Samaadhi* or *Brahmaanubhava* is possible even when one is alive. He is of the view that everyone can attain this state of identity with *Brahman* and thereby become a *Brahmajnaai*, here in this life. All that is required of an aspirant is to the practice the various steps of *Brahmaajijnaasa* and work on removing the ignorance, the cause of duality. In Bagavat Giita Bhaashya, Shankara says: "A *yogi* (in the Advaitic sense) attains *Brahmanirvaana* (same as *Brahmaanubhava*), the bliss of being *Brahman* or liberation, by being *Brahman* here itself, that is while he is alive."[195] Again commenting on the Upanishadic statement " is known only by implication as one invariably associated with the denial of illusory forms of *avidhyaa* and of *avidhyaa* itself.[169]

According to Vedaantins there is a difference between the perception of *Brahman* in *Brahmaanubhava* and the perception of concrete facts in the phenomenal existence. In the perception of concrete things, the mind goes out and takes on itself the determination of the object. Here, the perceiver become aware of the existence of the object, because of the fact that mind takes the form of the object, and thereby removes the perceiver's concrete ignorance about the object. If we take the example of the pot as the object of consciousness, it is known because the mind goes out through the senses and takes on itself the form of the pot. This modification of the mind removes the ignorance about the pot. As a result, consciousness expresses the object. This process is technically known as *falavaapya*. But in the perception of *Brahman* in *Samaadhi* is very different. In it, the mind does not take any concrete form, as *Brahman* has no form. *Brahman*-experience in *Samaadhi* is *vrittivaapya*. So the mind does not go out to experience *Brahman*, but rather it is transformed into *Brahman*, putting an end to all forms of ignorance.[170] Since we have clarified the meaning of the state of release, we could analyze its different types in the next section.

3.3.1.2. Types of *Samaadhi*

The later Advaitic writers speak of two types of *Samaadhi* depending on the nature and intensity of concentration. They are determinate absorption (*Savikalpa Samaadhi*) and indeterminate absorption (*Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*). In determinate absorption the aspirant abides in *Brahman*, but still retains his `I-consciousness'. Here, there exists the distinction between `the knower', `the known' and `the knowledge'. "Absorption attended with self-consciousness (*Savikalpa Samaadhi*) is that in which the mental state taking the form of *Brahman*, the One without a second, rests on It, but without merging of the distinction of the knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge."[171] Thus, determinate absorption is a state of *Brahman*-experience, in which the mind assumes the form of *Brahman* and rests on it with the distinction between subject and object still persisting. In other words, though the mind of seeker abides in *Brahman*, the contemplative faculty has not merged into the final witness, i.e., the absolute *Aatman* and as a result the three fold division of meditation, meditated and meditator, still persists in the seeker's mind in *Savikalpa Samaadhi*.[172] Thus, in determinate absorption the knowledge of absolute *Brahman* manifests itself, in spite of the fact that the consciousness is relative. The later Advaitins compare this state to one who possesses knowledge of both clay elephant and the clay that permeates the elephant. In this state, therefore, both the phenomenon and the noumenon (absolute substratum) are present before the seeker's mind, and the absolute reality peeps through the vestige of name and form. In other words, in the *Savikalpa Samaadhi* the seeker is already possessed by the truth, but still unable to realize it entirely.[173]

Nirvikalpa Samaadhi (indeterminate absorption) is the total absorption into *Brahman*. When an aspirant, having practiced *Savikalpa Samaadhi* for a long period of time, loses the sense of duality of the subject and the object altogether and becomes one with *Brahman*, he is said to have attained the state of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*. It is an "absorption without self consciousness . . . [and it consists in] the total mergence in *Brahman*, the One without a second, of the mental state which has assumed Its form, the distinction of knower, knowledge, and the object of knowledge being in this case obliterated."[174] In this state, the contemplative faculty itself is totally dissolved into *Brahman*. As a result all distinctions

between meditation, meditated and the meditator totally disappears and there remains only the eternal self. "Just as when salt has been dissolved in water it is no longer perceived separately, and the water alone remains, similarly the mental state that has assumed the form of *Brahman*, the One without a second, is no longer perceived, and only the self remains."[175] Thus, in this state there is no `I-consciousness' and no subject-object duality, as the meditative faculty is totally merged in *Brahman*. The *Panchiikarana-Vaarttikam* of Sureshvaraachaarya states about the *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi* as follows:

> When the contemplative mind is merged into *Aatman*, the Pure Consciousness, then it should not be disturbed. One should remain as that Infinite Consciousness like the full and motionless motion. Thus attaining perfect absorption through constant practice, an aspirant endowed with faith and devotion and having overcome the senses and anger perceives (realizes) the *Aatman*, One without a second.[176]

Thus, in the state of *Nirvikapa Samaadhi*, *Brahman*, the ultimate self shines by its own radiance. The aspirant having totally dissolved everything in *Brahman* experiences his absolute and total identity with *Brahman*.[177]

In order to attain the state of spiritual absorption in *Nirvikalpa Sammadhi*, the aspirant must attempt to overcome a number of obstacles. To quote Shankara: "While practicing [*Nirvikalpa*] *Samaadhi* there appears unavoidably many obstacles, such as lack of inquiry, idleness, desire for sense pleasure, dullness, distraction, tasting of joy and sense of blankness. One desiring the knowledge of *Brahman* should slowly get rid of such innumerable obstacles."[178] Advaitins speak of four obstacles that an aspirant must work on in order that the state of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi* is achieved. They are torpidity (*laya*), distraction (*vikshepa*), attachment (*kashaaya*) and enjoyment (*rasaavaada*).[179] Torpidity consists in the lapse of mental state into sleep or a sense of blankness because of one's failure to rest on the absolute. It is the result of laziness and fatigue in the aspirant.[180] Distraction is the resting of one's mental state on things other than the absolute *Brahman*. It happens due to the lack of concentration on the part of the aspirant. When he fails to focus his entire attention to rest on *Braahman*, he is distracted.[181] Attachment is the failure of one's mind to rest on the absolute *Brahman* due to the re-experiencing of the impressions (*vaasanas*) of sense pleasures experienced earlier. Even when there is no torpidity or distraction and everything seems to be calm, attachment can torment an aspirant, and as a result he will be prevented from fixing his mind on *Brahman*.[182] Enjoyment consists in the mind getting caught up in the state of bliss experienced by the seeker in the *Savikalpa Samaadhi*. As a result the aspirant is not able to rest the mind on *Brahman*. It can also happen when the aspirant enjoying the *Savikalpa Samaadhi*, having no inner strength to give up the bliss and to give himself to the practice of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi* with full mind and heart. In both the cases this feeling of enjoyment greatly hinders the spiritual progress of the aspirant, as he is unable to rest totally and fully on the absolute *Brahman* and thereby attain the *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*.[183]

When the mind of the aspirant is free from all these four obstacles, and rests fully in the absolute consciousness, just like a flame of a lamp sheltered from the wind,[184] he would be

moving towards the state of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*. The aspirant is called to do the following in order that he can remove these obstacles. When his mind is torpid, he must arouse and awaken it. When he is distracted, by perseverance and renunciation bring his mind to a state of calmness. When the mind is attached to past experiences of pleasures, become aware of such impressions and direct the attention to the absolute *Brahman*. When the mind continues to linger on the spiritual enjoyment of the bliss of *Savikalpa Samaadhi*, get unattached through discrimination of the lower from the higher. When the aspirant experiences a state of mental equipoise, he must continue to remain in it, never attempting to disturb himself from that state.[185] When an aspirant takes all these measures to overcome the obstacles, he would experience the absolute state of *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*, where he experiences his self as totally identical with the absolute *Brahman*.

If we accept the distinction of the two different states in *Samaadhi*, as proposed by the later Advaitins, then, without any doubt the latter state, *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi* is the same as self-realization (*Brahmaanubhava*). Here, the absolute identity between the seeker and *Brahman* is realized. Such a realized seeker becomes a *Brahmajnaani*. The emergence of *Brahmajnaani* out of the aspirant of self-realization is the goal of the state of *Samaadhi*. In the next section we turn our attention to this topic.

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3.3.2.1. Nature and Stages of *Brahmajnaani's* Existence

Here, we highlight the nature of the existence of *Brahmajnaani* in a general way. Besides, we would look into the two possible stages of the existence of *Brahmajnaani*, i.e., *Videhamukti* and *Jiivanmukti*.

3.3.2.1.1. Nature of *Brahmajnaai's* Existence

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limit his life, as they used to before the attainment of self-realization. *Brahmajnaani* has overcome all limitations of all these stages and the bodies associated with them, viz., the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body, respectively, and has become one with *Brahman*.[187]

Having crossed all these stages and reached the pinnacle of perfection, the *Brahmajnaani* knows the unreality of all these stages that marked his state of ignorance. He knows, now, that he is the eternal *Brahman*, pure consciousness and substratum of every phenomenal existence and stages of existence. *Brahmajnaani* becomes the true witness of the microcosmic and macrocosmic stages of stages of existence, viz., *Vishva*, *Taijasa*, *Praajna*, *Viraat*, *Hirayanagarbha* and *Iishvara*. As a being-in-the-world, the man-of-realization experiences all these conditioned stages, but he remains unaffected by them as he knows that he is *Brahman*, and there is no more reality to be known.[188] "For him {*Brahmajnaani*] who sees the all-pervading *Aatman*, of the supreme peace and bliss and the sole reality there remains nothing more to be attained and nothing more to be known."[189] There is nothing more to be attained for the *Brahmajnaani*, as in knowing the bliss of *Brahman*, there is nothing achievable left behind. In the same way, there is nothing more to be known for the *Brahmajnaani*, as in knowing him to be *Brahman* nothing more remains to be known.[190] Thus, "a wise one [*Brahmajnaani*] attains the acme of life having nothing more to be achieved, and thus becomes eternally free although still living. With the whole of his mind and heart thoroughly filled with *Aatman*, he does not perceive this world."[191] *Brahmajnaai*, therefore, is one who has allowed all the pluralistic manifestations of the microcosm and the macrocosm to merge into his eternal self, which is identical with *Brahman*.[192]

Having looked into the nature of the *Brahmajnaani*, we could speak of the two stages of his existence in the following section.

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We can speak of two stages of the existence of *Brahmajnaai*. When *Brahmajnaani* reaches the transcendental peak of existence, he is called *Videhamukta* and his state is called *Videhamukti*. For the *Videhamukta*, the empirical world is not more a reality, as he has awakened to the new vision of existence in which every form of illusion is removed. *Videhamukta* is said to have attained *Videhakaivalya*, which involves freedom of being alone undisturbed, denial of the body and forsaking of future life. In this state, the *karamic* seeds that leads to future births have been destroyed, by the clear vision of identity. The effects of past *karma* have been obliterated. As a result, there is no reason for the individual to continue living in the phenomenal world. *Videhamukta* passes into a calm existence, having lost to the empirical world and shedding his artificial personality that is characteristic of the *jiiva*. Such a state is identical with the dawn of knowledge about *Brahman*.[193] Thus, *Videhamukta* reaches the state of complete liberation (*kaivalya*) from which there is no return, as *karmic* forces are totally obliterated."[194]

Shankara is of the opinion that *Samaadhi* or *Brahmaanubhava* is possible even when one is alive. He is of the view that everyone can attain this state of identity with *Brahman* and

thereby become a *Brahmajnaai*, here in this life. All that is required of an aspirant is to the practice the various steps of *Brahmaajijnaasa* and work on removing the ignorance, the cause of duality. In Bagavat Giita Bhaashya, Shankara says: "A *yogi* (in the Advaitic sense) attains *Brahmanirvaana* (same as *Brahmaanubhava*), the bliss of being *Brahman* or liberation, by being *Brahman* here itself, that is while he is alive."[195] Again commenting on the Upanishadic statement "ÿby being *Brahman* one attains *Brahman*", Shankara says that *Brahmaanubhava* is possible while one is alive and there is no need for one to wait until death for its attainment. When ignorance is fully destroyed, the real nature of the self is revealed.[196] Such a *Brahmajnaani*, who enjoys liberated state in the present existence, is called *Jiivanmukta*. The state of liberation he enjoys is called *Jiivanmukti*. In fact, death does not change the essential condition of the *Jiivanmukta*, but only brings to a close the effects of the accumulate action which is still bearing fruit (*praarabdha karma*).[197] In other words, death puts an end to the present life, which is the effect of *praarabdha karma*.

Thus, the fundamental difference between *Videhamukta* and *Jiivanmukta* is that while the former is fully free from *praarabdha karma*, the latter is still under its sway. This is very clearly stated in the following quotation from *Vedaantasaara*:

> . . . Such a man's [*Jiivanmukta's*] soul remains as the illuminer [the witness of everything] of the mental states and the consciousness reflected in them experiencing solely for the maintenance of his body, happiness, and misery, the result of past actions that have already begun to bear fruit (*praarabdha*) and have been either brought on by his own will or by that of another or against his will. After exhaustion of the *praarabdha* work [through enjoyment and suffering], his vital force is absorbed in the Supreme *Brahman*, the Inward Bliss [and he becomes *Videhamukta*]; and ignorance with its effects and their impressions is also destroyed. Then he is identified with the Absolute *Brahman*, the Supreme Isolation, the embodiment of Bliss, in which there is not even the appearance of duality.[198]

Thus, *Videhamukti* and *Jiivanmukti* are not essentially different stages of *Brahmajnaai*, but it is basically same and the only difference between the two is the non-operation and operation of the *praarabdha karma* respectively. Having clarified the nature and stages of existence of *Brahmajnaani*, we could move on, in the next section, to analyze in detail the nature and characteristics of *Jiivanmukta*, i.e., the life of a realized man living this earthly existence.

3.3.2.2. *Jiivanmukta*

We have established that *Brahmaanubhava* is possible for everyone, even in this life, there arises the question of the possibility of the behavior of a *Jiivanmukta*. Since there is no duality in this transcendental existence, is it possible for the liberated man to live in this world of duality? Even if it is possible for him to live in this world, what is his nature? What are some of his basic characteristics? How is he different from an ordinary unrealized person? In this section, we will attempt to answer these basic questions regarding *Jiivanmukta*, by clarifying his nature and elaborating his characteristics.

3.3.2.2.1. Nature of *Jiivanmukta*

The behavior of the liberated man can be distinguished from that of others on the basis of the absence of ignorance and its effects. The fully realized soul does not possess any trace of ignorance and sees everything in *Brahman*. Thus, the behavior of the *Jiivanmukta* is characterized by oneness, while an ignorant person's behavior is based on experience of differences. Though *Jiivanmukta* lives in the world of duality none of the pairs of opposites disturb him as he sees all thing in terms of oneness with *Brahman*. Nothing affects him, since he sees everything in himself. An ignorant person considers others and different from himself and shapes his relationship with them accordingly, whereas the liberated man does not see others as different from himself and shapes his relationships with others in terms of oneness.[199] Thus, the liberated man is "one who by the knowledge of the absolute *Brahman*, his own self, has dispelled the ignorance regarding It, and has realized It, and who owing to the distinction of ignorance and its effects such as accumulated past actions, doubts, errors, etc., is free from all bondage and is established in *Brahman*."[200] Since *Jiivanmukta* sees everything in relation to his own self, the absolute *Brahman*, nothing can bring any change in his own self.

By his very nature *Jiivanmukta* is fearless. He cannot be afraid of anything. For Shankara says, "Fear is caused by the second entity or by things conceived to exist as different from the self. And when this notion of a second entity is eliminated by the realization of oneness, there will be no source of fear."[201] An ignorant person sees everything in terms of differences, and so there is every reason that there is fear in the person caught up by the phenomenal existence. But for the one who has realized *Brahman*, the absolute and indestructible self, there is nothing to be afraid of, as he is the one and the absolute.

Jiivanmukta transcends scriptures, ethical imperatives and social conventions. As an aspirant, he while working towards this ultimate realization eradicated all his passions, prejudices and attachments, and concentrated on *Brahman* alone. Thus, when he has attained the identity with *Brahman*, he is free from all faults and never makes false steps or sets a bad example. The fundamental difference between an aspirant for liberation and a *Jiivanmukta* is that the scriptural injunctions and moral practices bind the former, while the latter is neither a slave of laws, nor wantonly violates them. He is beyond laws and morality. [202] But great ethical virtues such as humility, unselfishness, purity, kindness and fellow feeling which prior to the attaining knowledge, he assiduously practiced for the purification of the mind, now, adorn him like jewels. He does not seek them or need them, but they cling to him.[203] "After realization, humility and other attributes which are steps to the attainment of knowledge, and also such virtues as non-injury, etc., persist like so many ornaments. [Again] . . . such qualities as non-violence, etc., come spontaneously to a man who has got self-knowledge [*Jiivanmukta*]. They have not to be sought after."[204]

The liberated man alone knows the true nature and meaning of freedom. He is free from all types of bondage imposed on man. He is the all-embracing self, and is absolutely free from the cares and worries of life. Shankara portrays the freedom enjoyed by the liberated man as follows:

> Sometimes he [*Jiivanmukta*] appears to be a fool, sometimes a wise man. Sometimes he seems splendid as a king sometimes feeble minded. Sometimes he draws men to him, as a python attacks its prey. Sometimes people honor him greatly sometimes they insult him. Some times ignore him. That is how the illumined soul lives, always absorbed in the highest bliss. He has no riches, yet he is always contented. He is helpless and yet of mighty power. He enjoys nothing, yet he is continuously rejoicing. He has no equal, yet not bound by action. He reaps fruits of the past action, but does not identify himself with it. He appears to be an individual, yet he is present in all things, everywhere. The knower of *Brahman*, who lives in freedom from body-consciousness, is never touched by pleasure or pain, good or evil.[205]

Thus, whatever may be the state or condition he is in, *Jiivanmukta* is free to conduct himself according to that condition. He is, in himself, the absolute and lacks nothing, and so is disturbed by nothing whatsoever. So *Jiivanmukta* enjoys a freedom which is not found in a man of ignorance.

The *Jiivanmukta* is without any desire and free from sorrow and grief. Desire arises, when the object of one's wish is not attained. Sorrow and grief arise when the object of one's desire is no longer with him. A person is sad because he has lost something, which was dear to him. In fact, desire, grief and sorrow are based on the experience of differences. *Brahman* is the absolute self and it lacks nothing. In attaining the self everything else is attained, for *Brahman* is the ultimate source of everything. Thus, absence of desire, grief and sorrow, in case of the *Jiivanmukta* is not due to suppression of desires but because of his realization of *Brahman*, after reaching which, there remains nothing to be desired.[206] To quote Shankara "The things perceived by the senses cause him [*Jiivanmukta*] neither grief nor pleasure. He is not attached to them. Neither does he shun them. . . . He lives desireless amidst the objects of desire. The *Aatman* is his eternal satisfaction. He sees the *Aatman* in all things."[207] Therefore, there is nothing left to desire and there is nothing that can bring him sorrow.

The *Jiivanmukta* lives in this bodily state as long as there lasts the accumulated effects of the past action that have begun to bear fruit (*praarabdha karma*). Until that time *Jiivanmukta* might engage himself in working for the welfare of others. As a possessor of the body, which is the result of earlier *karma*, he experiences that which is characteristic of material forms like hunger, thirst, illness, and old age. But, these never overwhelm him, for he knows the truth of their passing nature and of his nature as the absolute *Brahman*. *Vedaantasaara* comments on this point as follows:

> Such a liberated man, while not in *Samaadhi*, sees actions not opposed to knowledge taking place under the momentum of past impressions -- actions that have already begun to bear fruit which he experiences through the physical body composed of flesh, blood and other things; through the sense organs affected by blindness, weakness, incapacity, etc. and through his mind subject to hunger, thirst, grief, delusion, etc. -- yet he does not consider them as real, for he has already known their nothingness. As a man who is

conscious of that magical performance is being given, even though he sees it, does not consider it as real.[208]

Therefore, the liberated man, the true knower of the self, is one, who "sees nothing in the waking state, even as in dreamless sleep; who though beholding duality, does not really behold it, since he beholds only the absolute; who though engaged in work is inactive."[209]

In this section, so far, we have elaborated the behavior that is typical of the nature of the *Jiivanmukta*. In the next section, we could proceed to spell out some of the significant characteristics of the person who has attained self-realization.

3.3.2.2.2. Characteristics of *Jiivanmukta*

The man of realization is one with the supreme *Brahman*. His individuality is fully developed, as it has fully merged with the all-pervading absolute consciousness. With the self-realization, the *Jiinvanmukta* acquires a number of qualities and attributes. Herein we could mention some of the basic characteristics of man-of-realization.

Independence is one of the marked traits of a *Jiivanmukta*. This attribute emerges from the fact that the realized man is not dependent on his body and its perceptions, his mind and its affection, and his intellect and its thoughts. As long as a person is attached to these physical faculties, he is affected by physical conditions, swayed by emotions and colored by ideas. Thus, the identification of oneself with the body, the mind and the intellect is the reason for one's dependence on the world. But a *Jiivanmukta* has detached himself from these faculties of the body and identified himself with the supreme self. Therefore, the world cannot touch him. As he is free from the physical, mental and intellectual affections and modifications, *Jiivanmukta* remains pure and uncontaminated by the world. The Vedaantins use the illustration of a coconut to clarify the independence that marks the life of a self-realized person. When a coconut is raw, the kernel of the coconut sticks to the shell, as it cannot exist apart from the shell. Breaking the shell would bring about the breaking of the kernel as well. But when the coconut dries up completely, the kernel gets separated from the shell, and it shakes within the shell. If one breaks the shell now the kernel does not break and it remains unhurt, as it is free from the attachment to the shell. This is the same with the self. So long as one identifies his self with the body-mind-intellect system his life is affected by the world. His life can be compared to a raw coconut that sticks to the shell. But *Jiivanmukta* is like the kernel that is totally independent of the shell, remaining ever unaffected by the affections of the world, enjoying a bliss of *Brahman*,which his true self.[210]

Jiivanmukta is a man of universal love. In him there is no trace of selfishness. His love is truly other-centered. The love people have for each other in the phenomenal living is often not true love. It is an uneven or preferential love, which is basically a love that involves selfishness. If we look into the core of this preferential love, we find nothing else but self-love. For example when a man loves his sun dearly, his love is fundamentally directed to his own well being. True love is not preferential, but universal and it is same for one and all. The interest, attention and identification involved in the love of the *Jiivanmukta* is for all

and yet to everyone in particular. This universal love is not limited to or bound by caste, creed, color, community or country. It is an unfixed and all-pervading love, yet reaches to every individual, without any fixation and attachments on the part of the realized man. Thus, the self-realized man is an embodiment of divine love that is free from all worldly divisions and separations.[211] Another striking quality that we find in *Jiivanmukta* is the sense of objectivity. It means to maintain an impersonal attitude towards every situation in life. It implies being distanced, unattached and uninvolved. Being objective does not mean lack of concern for people around. But it means a distanced and an uninvolved concern. The realized man is truly concerned about the welfare of everyone around him, but in judgment about people and situations he is objective and uninvolved. He is concerned about the world but not entangled with it. Nothing disturbs the inner serenity of his being one with absolute self. Being one with the universal self, the *Jiivanmukta* watches perceptions, emotions and thoughts pass by without any attachment to them. He treats his body, mind and intellect as things other than his true self. Thus, he becomes an eternal witness (*sakshi*) to all happenings in the world. The *Jiivanmukta* is like the sun. He does everything in the world, but he is not entangled with anything in the world. The sun brings about life and luster, everywhere. It makes the plants grow, water flow, wind blow, evaporates water and brings rain. Though the sun does all these activities in the world, it is not at all involved in the world. Its presence is objective and distanced to the world in which it acts. It makes things happen in the world, without getting involved. Thus, the sun is an uninvolved witness. The man-of-realization, like the sun, makes everything right in the world, eradicates sorrows and miseries of those who come to him and brings light of joy to all, yet living in the totally unruffled and undisturbed state of mind. Resting in his true self, the realized man looks at life, events, happenings and people without any prejudice and bias. He realizes the objective truth that all is *Brahman* and rests secure in this truth.[212]

Resting secure in the truth that `all is *Brahman*' the *Jiivanmukta* experiences total fulfillment in his life. There is nothing that remains to be satisfied for a realized man. He is totally filled with *Brahman* that he aspires for nothing in this world. Neither physical pleasure, nor emotional joy and intellectual delight affect the *Jiivanmukta*. This fulfillment of the man-of-realization comes from his knowledge that he is everywhere and everything, and that the world cannot give him any joy. The *Jiivanmukta* is absolutely full (*paripuurna*) and lacks nothing. Because he experiences fulfillment in *Brahman*, i.e., in the bliss of the self, neither the loss nor any gain would in any way affect the realized man. So, in him there is no stress or strain, no tension of any kind, no grief, sorrow or guilt. He is totally complete and fulfilled. He experiences a sense of self-sufficiency, which leaves him in a state of permanent joy within, that nothing of his experiences in the world affects him.[213]

The realized man experiences a sense of fulfillment in *Brahman*. Two characteristics, viz., cheerfulness and dynamism, mark this self-fulfilled existence. The cheerfulness that is manifested by the *Jiivanmukta* is an outward expression of the inner fulfillment and bliss he experiences by his oneness with *Brahman*. It helps the realized man to be in the state of equipoise and joy in spite of many troubles he may experience in his life. Though cheerfulness is a distinguishing mark of the realized man, it is not often externally manifested. Even if unexpressed, this cheerfulness remains a permanent feature in the realized man. The cheerful *Jiivanmukta* does not remain just living in his own joy and bliss,

but moves on in a dynamic way to work for the removal of evil and miseries that people experience in the world. The spiritual energy generated by *Brahman*-realization remains a dynamic force within the realized man, that he wishes and works for giving the absolute experience he had to all, as long as he lives in this world. The quality of dynamism expresses itself in the physical, mental and intellectual levels of the *Jiivanmukta*, as he attempts to reach out with the mission of giving the *Brahman*- experience to all.[214]

All we have said regarding the nature and characteristics of a *Jiivanmukta* are only approximations. Just as *Brahman* and *Brahmaanubhava* are incomprehensible and indescribable, so too the nature and characteristics of *Jiivanmukta* are not describable. All we can say about the *Jiivanmukta* and his behavior is only from phenomenal point of view. All we have done in trying to describe the nature and qualities of the *Jiivanmukta* is to negate qualities like fear, desire, duality, differences, dependence, selfishness and similar attributes that are characteristic of those live under the sway of ignorance. In other words, we have only said what the *Jiivanmukta* is not rather than what he is. He, like *Brahman*, is indescribable. Therefore, the so-called characteristics mentioned are only one possible way of taking about the *Jiivanmukta*, i.e., from the phenomenal point of view. From the absolute (*paramaartha*) point of view, *Jiivanmukta* is *Brahman* and is of the nature of the unknowable and indescribable *Brahman*.[215]

NOTES

1. *UI*, II, ii, 3, p. 89.

2. *MUB*, I, i, 5.

3. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, pp. 42-43.

4. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 61.

5. *BGB*, XVIII, 50.

6. Cf. *BSB*, I, i, 1, p. 7, fn. 18.

7. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 9-10, fn. 26.

8. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 10-11, fn. 26, 30.

9. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 219.

10. Cf. *BSB*, I, i, 4, p. 43.

11. Cf. Smet de R.V., *The Theological Method of Shankara* Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1953), pp. 165-166.

12. Cf. Mahendra Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 226.

13. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 221-222.

14. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 222.

15. Cf. A.Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 178-179.

16. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

17. Cf. *BG*, III, 30.

18. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 190-191.

19. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 178.

20. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 222-225.. *Bheda-upaasana* involves duality, as in it the seeker while experiencing his delight in the Lord keeps himself separate. *Abheda-upaasana*, though leads to the loss of finite consciousness and an absorption into the infinite consciousness, would require the need of reflective criticism and discriminating consciousness to destroy ignorance, as ignorance is destroyed by knowledge alone. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

21. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, p. 178.

22. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 186.

23. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 219-220.

24. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 220-221, 225-226.

25. Ramamurthi A., p. 67. Cf. Also *BGB*, V, 12. Cf. Also *BUB*, III, i, 285. The knowledge we are speaking about here is the intellectual grasp of the import of the scriptural sayings. This intellectual understanding of what is revealed in the scriptures about *Brahman* helps one to eliminate the superimposed qualities on the self or *Brahman*. According to Shankara, the scriptures which are the supreme and final authority regarding the self or *Brahman*, obtain their authoritativeness only because they serve to eliminate the superimposition of qualities attributed to the self, but not by revealing what is altogether unknown. The scriptures negatively point to the nature of *Brahmaanubhava*. Cf. *BGB*, II, 18. Cf. Also *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 3, pp. 6-8..

26. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 219-220.

27. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaantic Treatise*, p. 179.

28. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 229-230.

29. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 230.

30. Cf. *AI*, no. 112, pp. 59-60.

31. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 113-114, pp. 60-61.

32. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 115, p. 61.

33. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 114-115, pp. 60-61.

34. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 119-120, pp. 63-64.

35. *Ibid.*, no. 118, p. 62.

36. *Ibid.*, nos. 119-120, pp. 63.

37. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 230-231.

38. *MUB*, II, pp. 155-156.

39. Cf. Shankara, "Statasloki", *The Works of Shankara* (Srirangam: Srivanivilas, 1910), Vol. XV, no. 40.

40. Cf. Ramamurth A., p. 69.

41. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 1, pp. 1-2.

42. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 2.

43. *Raajayoga* proposed by Patanjali has eight limps. So it is also called *Ashtaangayoga*. The eight limps are *Yama* (five purifications), *Niyama* (five virtuous practices), *Aasana* (posture), *Praanaayaama* (breath-control), *Pratyaahaara* (withdrawal of senses), *Dhaaranaa* (one pointed attention), *Dhyaana* (meditation) and *Samaadhi* (absorption). Cf. *VSS*, nos. 200-208, pp. 199-122.

44. Cf. *VSS*, no. 201, p. 120.

45. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 202, p. 120.

46. Cf. *AI*, nos. 104-105, pp. 55-56.

47. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 1, pp. 2-3.

48. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 3.

49. Cf. *VSS*, no. 205, p.121.

50. Cf. *AI*, no. 121, p. 64.

51. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 1, p. 3.

52. *AI*, no. 107, p. 57.

53. *Ibid.*, nos. 108-109, pp. 57-58.

54. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 1, p. 3.

55. Cf. *AI*, no. 122, pp. 64-65.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

57. *Ibid.*, no. 110, p. 58.

58. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 110-111, pp. 58-59.

59. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 1, p. 3.

60. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 3.

61. Cf. *AI*, nos. 116-117, pp. 61-62.

62. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 1, p. 3.

63. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.

64. Cf. *ibid.*

65. *VSS*, no. 16, pp.9-10.

66. Cf. *BSB*, I, i, 1, p. p

67. *AI*, no. 4, p. 3.

68. Cf. *ibid.*

69. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, p. 200.

70. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 240.

71. Cf. *VC*, p. 35. Cf. Also *BSB*, I, i, 1, p. 9.

72. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 70.

73. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 240-241.. Though renunciation is one of the important moral conditions in *Brahmaajijnaasa*, it is wrong to

think that it cannot be dispensed with. If an aspirant's heart is pure and mind is not swayed by worldly enjoyments, then he would not need renunciation to move into deeper level of knowledge. Vedaantic thinkers hold divergent views as to the necessity of renunciation as a condition in moral preparation. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 242-243.

74. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, pp. 34-35. Cf. Also *VC*, pp. 35-36.

75. *BSB*, I, i, 1, p. 9

76. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 36. Cf. Also *VSS*, no. 25, p. 14. Cf. Also *AI*, no.9, p. 6.

77. Cf. *VSS*, no. 6, pp. 3-4.

78. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 7, p. 5.

79. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 8, p. 5.

80. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 9, pp. 5-6.

81. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 10, p. 6.

82. Cf. *ibid.*, no.11, p. 6.

83. Cf. *ibid.*, no.12, p. 7.

84. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 13, pp. 7-8.

85. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 2, pp. 4-5.

86. *UI*, II, xvi, 72, p. 190.

87. *MUB*, I, ii, 12.

88. *BUB*, IV, iii, 33.

89. Cf. *MUB*, I, ii, 12.

90. Cf. *CU*, VI, xiv, 2.

91. Cf. *MUB*, I, ii, 12.

92. Cf. *VSS*, no. 30, pp. 18-19.

93. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 31, p. 20.

94. *MU*, I, ii, 13.

95. *BUB*, I, iv, 9, p. 56.

96. *KUB*, II, 8.

97. Cf. *VSS*, no. 182, p. 111.

98. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 183-184, p. 112. Cf. Also *BSB*, I, i, 4, pp. 25, 30, fn. 62, 69.

99. Cf. *VSS*, nos. 185-190, pp. 112-115.

100. *CU*, VI, ii, 1.

101. *ibid.*, VI, viii, 7; VI, xvi, 3.

102. Cf. *ibid.*, VI, ix, 4; VI, xi, 3; VI, xv, 3.

103. *ibid.*, VI, i, 7.. Cf. Also. *BU*, III, ix, 26.

104. Cf. *ibid.*, VI, xiv, 2.

105. *ibid.*, VI, i, 3.

106. *ibid.*, VI, i, 4.

107. Cf. *ibid.*, VI, i, 5-6.

108. *Ke.U.B.*, II, i, 4, p. 25, fn. 62.

109. Ramamurthi A., p. 72.

110. Cf. *VSS*, no. 191, pp. 115-116.

111. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. 42.

112. Cf. *ibid.*. Cf. Also *VSS*, no. 137, p. 86.

113. *MU*, I, i, 6.

114. *BU*, II, iii, 6.

115. *ibid.*, III, ix, 26.

116. Eliot Deucsch, p. 9.

117. Cf. *BU*, II, iii, 6.

118. Cf. *BUB*, II, ii, 6. Cf. Also *BSB*, III, ii, 22, p. 623.

119. *UI*, II, iii, 3, p. 91.

120. Cf. *BSB*, III, ii, 22, p. 624.

121. Cf. Blackwood, "Neti Neti B Epistemological Problem of Mystical Experience", *Philosophy East and West*, XIII (1963), p. 205.

122. Cf. Smet de R.V., p. 24.

123. *Ke.U.*, I, 3.

124. *BU*, III, viii, 8.

125. *BG*, XIII, 12.

126. *BGB*, XIII, 12.

127. Cf. Smet de R.V., p. 248.

128. *BU*, III, vi, 1.

129. Cf. *VSS*, nos. 122-136, pp. 73-85.

130. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 124, pp. 73-74.

131. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 125, p. 75.

132. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 126, pp. 75-76.

133. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 127, pp. 76-77.

134. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 128, pp. 77-78.

135. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 129, pp. 78-79.

136. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 130, pp. 79-80.

137. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 131, pp. 80-81.

138. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 132, p. 81.

139. *Ibid.*, nos. 133-135, pp. 81-85.

140. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 246.

141. Cf. *BSB*, I, i, 4, p. 25, fn. 62

142. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 246.

143. Ramamurthi A., p. 72.

144. *VSS*, no. 192, p. 116.

145. Cf. *BG*, XIII, 24.

146. *AI*, no. 123, p. 165.

147. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 246-247.

148. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 247.

149. Cf. *AB*, Parthasarathy, no. 31, pp. 63-64.

150. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 30, pp. 60-62.

151. *Ma.U.*, I, i.

152. Cf. *PV*, no. 44.

153. Cf. *PM*, pp. 1-5.

154. Cf. *ibid.*, p. xix. Cf. Also A. Mahadeva Sastri, pp. 144-146.

155. *PV*, no. 45.

156. Cf. *ibid.*

157. Cf. *PM*, p. xix.

158. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 6, xix.

159. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. xix-xx.

160. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. xx-xxi.

161. *PM*, p. 6.

162. *PV*, no. 49.

163. Cf. *ibid.*

164. Cf. Paul Deussen, *The System of Vedaanta*, p. 401.. Since *Brahmaanubhava* is of the same nature of *Brahman*, Shankara held that liberation couldn't be attained by any means other than knowledge. Cf. *ibid.*

165. *AI*, no. 124, p. 66.

166. Cf. *ibid.*

167. Cf. *VSS*, no. 199, p. 119.

168. Cf. *PI*, VII, 56.

169. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 276.

170. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 277-279. Cf. Also. *PI*, VII, 90-92.

171. *VSS*, no. 194, pp. 116-117.

172. Cf. *PV*, nos. 50-51.

173. Cf. *VSS*, no. 195, p. 117

174. *VSS*, no. 197, p. 118.

175. *VSS*, no. 198, p. 118.

176. *PV*, nos. 52-53.

177. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, pp. 99-100.

178. *AI*, nos. 127-128, pp. 67-68.

179. Cf. *VSS*, no. 209, p. 122.

180. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 210, p. 122.

181. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 211, p. 122.

182. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 212, p. 123.

183. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 213, p. 123.

184. Cf. *BG*, VI, 19.

185. Cf. *VSS*, nos. 214-215, pp. 123-124.

186. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 286-288.

187. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, p. 224.

188. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 224-225.

189. *PV*, no. 55.

190. Cf. *ibid.*

191. Cf. *ibid.*, no. 56.

192. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 225.

193. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, pp. 288-289.

194. Cf. A. Mahadeva Sastri, p. 54.

195. *BGB*, V, 24.

196. Cf. *BUB*, V, iv, 6.

197. Advaitins speak of three kinds of effects of action (*karma*), which influence the future life of an individual. The first of these effects of action is *sanchita karma*, the accumulated or stored up fruits of action. The second is *aagami karma*, the fruits of action yet to come. The third is *praarabdha karma*, which consists of actions that are bearing fruit at present. According to Advaitins, the *Jiivanmukta*, by removal of ignorance breaks all effects of past actions and of actions yet to come. But *praarabdha*, i.e., the liberated man's actions that are bearing fruit at present, will influence his present life, until it comes to a close. Thus death does not change essentially the condition of *Jiivanmukta*, but only puts an end to the accumulated *karma*, which is still bearing fruit. Cf. *VSS*, no. 217, pp. 125-126.

198. *VSS*, no. 226, p. 131.

199. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 54.

200. *VSS*, no. 217, pp. 125-126.

201. *BUB*, I, iv, 2.. Cf. Also *TUB*, II, vii, 1.

202. Cf. *VSS*, no. 222, pp. 128-129.

203. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, pp. 111-112.

204. *VSS*, nos. 224-225, p. 130.

205. *VC*, pp. 111.. Cf. Also *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p.112.

206. Cf. Ramamurthi, A., p. 55.

207. *VC*, pp. 110-111.

208. *VSS*, no. 219, p. 127.

209. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, pp. 113-114. Cf. Also *VSS*, no. 221, p. 128.

210. Cf. A. Parthasarathy, *Vedaanta Treatise*, pp. 227-228, 338-339.

211. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 226-227, 339.

212. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 238, 340.

213. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 230-231.

214. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 340-341.

215. Cf. Mahendranath Sircar, *The System of Vedic Thought and Culture*, p. 287.

CHAPTER FOUR

A CRITIQUE

So far in our study of Shankara's Advaitic experience of Self-realization (*Brahmaanubhava*), we have looked into its nature, the condition for its attainment and the path to its attainment. In doing so we have also analyzed his Non-Dualistic approach to the understanding of reality and human destiny. Now, we need to raise the question whether the philosophical approach of Shankara is able give a true explanation of reality and that of authentic human destiny? In other words, there arises the question whether the Non-Dualism (Advaita) of Shankara, as a system of thought and practice, is sufficient to answer various issues that baffle man and his existence? Many critics have questioned the validity of the Advaitic system of Shankara. Some have attempted to propound interpretations and critiques in terms of non-Indian traditions and hence less apt to express adequately the Advaitc Mysticism of Shankara. In our critique, we attempt at a negative and positive appraisal of the system of Shankara. In doing so we would also take up the critical consideration of some of the issues that have emerged in our unfolding of the path of Shankara, even though these topics refer to his philosophy as a whole.

4.1. NEGATIVE APPRAISAL

Our aim here is to consider those issues in Shankara's thought that lacks clarity and need further elaboration. Some of such questions that call our attention are the Dualism inherent in Shankara's Non-Dualism, the incommunicability of the identity-experience of *Brahmaanubhava*, the role of the other in one's authentic destiny, the practicability of the *Jnaana* path and the bodily nature of man. In the following pages we could briefly consider each of these topics.

4.1.1. Dualism Inherent in Shankara's Non-Dualism

Though Shankara's philosophy is non-dualistic (Advaitic), there permeates a Dualism in Shankara's conception of knowledge. Shankara envisages two levels of reality, viz., the phenomenal and the transcendental. Therefore, he has to hold for a dualistic theory of knowledge. The knowledge of the phenomenal reality is characterized by subject-object duality. Therefore, in the level of knowledge there is always the distinction between the experiencer and the experienced, the knower and the known, the seer and the seen, the subject and the object, the ego and the non-ego. The seer is the perceiver who is identical with the subject of experience in question, and is of the nature of consciousness and intelligence. The seen is the thing perceived and is identical with the object and is sentient by nature. Thus, the perceiver and the perceived are mutually opposed and never can be identified with each other. All the means of empirical knowledge, viz., the perception,

inference, comparison, supposition, non-perception and scriptural testimony presuppose the subject-object distinction and operate in the realm of phenomenal reality. According to Vedaanta school of thought, all these *pramaanas* are valid means of knowledge, as they give knowledge of the phenomenal world. But, we cannot hold them absolute, because their scope is limited to the empirical order. When considered in relation to *Paraa Vidhyaa*, their reality and the truth they give cease to exist. As a result, we cannot use them in the transcendental order. This does not mean that *pramaanas* are useless. They are useful, valid and necessary as long as we are under the sway of the empirical consciousness of *jiiva*. The transcendental state is characterized by a knowledge that is non-dual and unitive. It is based on the identity-experience of the seeker that his inner self, *Aatman*, is identical with *Brahman*. Such knowledge is eternal and not bound by time. In it, there is no distinction between the seer and the seen, as they both are one and the same. Everything is experienced from the perspective of the primordial experience of *Brahman*.

From what we have said it is clear that there is an essential and fundamental difference between the phenomenal and transcendental knowledge. Both are diametrically opposed to each other. One who is in the empirical existence does not posses the transcendental knowledge, and to the *Jiivanmukta*, who has attained the transcendental state of existence, the empirical knowledge becomes unreal. Such an epistemological position amounts to a Dualism, as it pre-supposes two unrelated levels of knowledge. In a dualistic epistemological stand, the objectivity of knowledge would be lacking, as wouldB the phenomenal and the transcendental Beach type of knowledge be true only from their respective points of view. Besides, there is the difficulty of genuine communication between persons who belong to the phenomenal and the transcendental levels of existence, as the phenomenal knowledge is unreal to the self-realized person and the transcendental knowledge is inaccessible to the one, who is in the phenomenal level. Thus, Shankara's dualistic epistemological theory does not account for objectivity of knowledge and genuine objective communication

4.1.2. Incommunicability of Self-realization

The self-realization involves an identity-experience, wherein one realizes his oneness with the ultimate *Brahman*. Therefore, self-realization is of the nature of *Brahman*, i.e., without subject-object duality, eternal and uncaused, immediate and direct, besides being incomprehensible, indescribable and trans-empirical. *Brahmaanubhava* is not available to the empirical experience, as the scope of the former goes far beyond that of the latter. The words and languages we use refer to the phenomenal world and relative realities. As *Brahman* is beyond the phenomenal, *Brhamaamubhava* cannot be described in ordinary language. Therefore, one can speak of self-realization only by way of negation, by denying the qualities of the empirical experience superimposed on it. For instance, the qualities that are attributed to *Brahman*, such as reality (*satyam*), knowledge (*jnaanam*) and infinitude (*aanandam*) are not positive descriptions of *Brahman*, but are mere negations of qualities superimposed on *Brahman*, such as unreality, ignorance and finitude. Thus, all statements we make about *Brahman*, *Brahmaamubhava* and *Brahmajnaani* are mere approximations in the light of the phenomenal knowledge. Such a philosophical position makes self-

realization, for all practical purposes, incommunicable. Since, *Brahmaanbhava* is unknowable and indescribable, it cannot be communicated by the *Brahmajnaani* to any one in the realm of phenomenal existence. Since *Brahman*-experience cannot be passed on to the other in any form of communication, it would always remain the subjective experience of the *Brahmajnaani*. Any attempt to communicate it, using phenomenal language, would be nothing else but a mere phenomenal approximation of the transcendental experience. Such approximations would never take one to the core of self-realization, as it is incommunicable.

4.1.3. Insignificance of the Other's Role in *Brahmaajijnaasa*

Shankarite path to self-realization, viz., the movement from ignorance to knowledge, is a way that is basically walked by the aspirant alone. The only involvement of the other, on the aspirant's effort to attain the goal of *Brahmaanubhava*, is the *Guru*. He is a detached guide, who helps the student to understand the true import of the Vedaantic statements, especially at the hearing (*sravana*) state of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. The relationship that exists between the aspirant and the *Guru* is that of a teacher and a student. In this relationship, the aspirant is totally obedient to the *Guru*, does personal service to him, looks after the daily chores in the *ashram* and listens to the teachings of the *Guru* Thou relationship,Bby sitting at his feet. It is not a one to one, I in which one enters into the life of the other as an equal partner. Other than the teacher, the aspirant does not have any significant relationship with any other person. This is clear from what the aspirant does in the three stages of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, viz., *sravana*, *manaana* and *nididhyaasana*. In these three stages of *Brahmaajijnaasa* the aspirant firstly, hears the instructions of the teacher personally. Secondly he reflects on the content of the *Guru's* teachings in solitude, so as to remove the apparent contradictions and to be intellectually convinced of the true import of the scriptural aphorisms. Thirdly, he meditates in silence on the truths he achieved through hearing and reflection. The various stages of *Brahmaajijnaasa* in the *jnaana* path are so centered on the individual seeker and his personal effort the presence of the other in the process is seen as an interference that would distract him from the goal of self-realization. So the seeker is basically all alone through out the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. Even after the seeker has attained self-realization, he does not need to have any relationship with the other or to a community of others, because all such relationships would be irrelevant and unreal to the *Brahmajnaani*. Thus, Shankara's path to self-realization does not give any Thou relationship that is genuine andBsignificance to the I inter-subjective communion of hearts between human persons.

4.1.4. Impracticality of the Shankarite Path

The *jnaana* path to self-realization involves a deep understanding of the illusoriness of phenomenal reality, the fundamental oneness of everything in *Brahman* and discriminative consciousness that would enable the seeker to break through the appearance and apprehend the underlying absolute reality. To attain this goal, the seeker must go through a rigorous path of physical, moral and intellectual preparations. The physical preparation involves the practice of *Hathayoga*, with its twofold limps: *aasana* and *pranayaama*. The

moral preparation calls the seeker to practice the fourfold ethical disciplines called instruments of spiritual knowledge, acquire the four spiritual qualities, viz., the discrimination between the eternal and calmness,Bthe non-eternal, renunciation, the practice of six virtues self-control, self-settledness, forbearance, faith and complete concentration, and the hunger for liberation. The intellectual preparation includes the three stages of hearing, reflection and meditation. Thus, the *jnaana* path demands that the seeker is a person of healthy body, strong-will, keen mind and sharp intellect. If these qualities are expected of the aspirant, even before he begins the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, a great majority of the people in the world would never be able begin the process of self-realization. Thus, the path of Shankara to self-realization is not practical in the sense that majority of the people would not be able to use it. This is probably the reason that Shankara spoke of the indirect method of *karma* and *bhakti*, as preparation for the *jnaana* path. Thus, the Shankarite path to *Brahmaanubhava* is not practical, as it aims at helping only the intellectual and the wise persons for attaining self-realization, leaving out the vast majority of people.

4.1.5. Bodily Nature of Man

Shankara does not give importance to the bodily nature of man. For him, body is part of the phenomenal existence, which is not the ultimate reality. Therefore, body has only a relative existence. He speaks of three levels in the bodily nature of man, viz., the gross body, the subtle body and the bliss body, each of which belongs to the realm of m*aayaa*. Of these, only the gross body ceases to be at death, while the other two bodies survive death and constitute subtle and bliss bodies, giving the basis for the gross body *jiiva* takes in the next birth. The loss of the gross body, at the death of *jiiva* is compared to a snake casting off its skin, when it does not perform the proper function of the snake. Body is the seat of emotions and appetites, which prevent the self from attaining the true goal of man. Therefore, one's attitude towards his body is one of discipline and control. The body must be trained by the use of *Hathayoga*, in order that it can be submitted to the directions of the inner self. Body and bodily existence are the result of the past *karma*. When all the fruits of the actions are removed, body will also cease to be. In the state of *Jiivanmukti*, the liberated person continues to live in the bodily state because of the effects of the accumulated *karma* still bearing fruit (*praarabdha*), but having no attachments to the body. In the state of *Videhamukti*, the *Videhamukta* passes into a calm existence, having lost to the empirical world and shedding the artificial personality, including the body, that is characteristic of the *jiiva*, the psycho-physical-conscious organism. Therefore, Shankara does not envisage the existence of the body, at the final state of liberation, as Christianity recognizes the resurrection of the body and a bodily existence after resurrection. From what we have said it is clear that, for Shankara, the bodily state of man is a product of *maayaa*, and it ceases to exist at the dawn of true knowledge. Thus, in Shankarite system of thought, the bodily nature of man is not given the rightful place, as it has no real existence and that it ha no place in the ultimate state of man's existence.

4.2. POSITIVE APPRAISAL

In this section, we would take up the defense of a few general issues, which had been raised against Shankara by later Advaitic schools, most notably by the Qualified Non-Dualism (Vshistaadvaita) of Ramaanuja and a number of western scholars. Of the many questions that are raised against the Non-dualism of Shankara, we will consider five, which remain central today. The first issue pertains to the reality of the external world. In this regard some scholars consider Shankara as a subjective idealist, as he seems to attribute no reality to the external world. Secondly, in the west, many may think that Advaita Vedaanta is a sort of pantheism, according to which the individual soul loses, as it were, its identity and becomes one with *Brahman*. Thirdly, Shankara is often accused of down playing significance of ethical system, as he did not work out a system of morality that would be applicable to the individual at every stage of his existence in the world. The fourth objection that is brought against Advaita Vedaanta is that it is anti-worship and anti-religion in character, since the liberated man is identical with *Brahman*. Finally, many consider Shankara as negative and pessimistic in his approach to reality and attaining authentic human destiny. In the following pages, we will take up these criticisms leveled against Shankara's Advaita Vedaanta and see whether the contentions of these critics are founded on facts.

4.2.1. Reality of the Phenomenal World

The most contested question in Shankara's Advaita philosophy concerns the reality of the external world. Shankara very strongly holds the view that *Brahman* is absolutely real and the external world is *maayaa*. The term *maayaa* is often translated as illusion or unreality. Some scholars take this translation of the term literally and argue that Shankara denied the existence of the external world. They try to fit Shankara and his Advaita Vedaanta into the Hegelian or Berkeleyan idealistic tradition. They consider him as a subjective idealist, who reduces the external world logically to the knowing and perceiving subject. Thus, according to these thinkers, Shankara attributes no reality to the external world, which depends only on the subjective consciousness of the perceiver. Max Mueller summarizes his position on this point as follows: "In one half verse I shall tell you what has been taught in thousands of volumes: *Brahman* is true, the world is false; the soul is *Brahman* and nothing else."[1] Chakravarti affirms the same point when he says, "It is Shankara alone who says that it should be concluded that everything except *Brahman* is illusion, because *Brahman* is the one reality."[2]

Many thinkers deny the idealistic interpretation of Shankara's concept of *maayaa*. They say that by his concept of *Brahmaanubhaba*, Shankara does not teach that the world is unreal. R. Pratap Singh says, " Shankara's intention is not to preach any variety of subjective idealism or to lay foundation on mentalism."[3] Many other thinkers share this view. K. C. Bhattacharrya considers that *maayaa* "cannot be characterized as whither real or as unreal." [4] K. A. Krishnamurthy Iyer notes that " the world is not a mere phantasy; it is not a mere summer dream; it is but a disguise worn by reality to the time-bound intellect."[5] Radhakrishnan remarks that for Shankara "unreal the world is, illusory it is not." [6]

According to the second group of thinkers, Shankara did recognize the reality of the reality of the external world, even though he did not consider *maayaa* as the absolute reality.

It would seem that the latter group of thinkers present, the true position of Shankara on the reality of the external world. Shankara is neither a Hegelian, nor a Berkelyan, or any kind of subjective idealist. In order to understand the true position of Shankara on this point we need to make distinction between different kinds of experiences. The first kind of experience is called *pratabhasika* (illusory experience), which consists in experiencing an object, which is not present before one's senses. For instance, a rope is seen as a snake, or a shell lying on the beach is seen as a piece of sliver in the moonlight. There is no real snake or silver piece; they are only mistaken perceptions. This kind of illusory experience can be contradicted in the worldly state. For instance, the true nature of the things that appeared as a snake or as a piece of silver, (viz., the rope and the shell respectively) can be known by a true perception of the same objects. Therefore, such experiences are false perceptions.

The second kind of experience is *vyavahaarika* (the empirical experience), which consists in the universe of every day perception, the world of names and forms. This is the realm of *maayaa*. It is not merely illusory, but phenomenal. Unlike the illusory experience, the phenomenal experience is neither non-existent (*abhaava*) nor void (*suunya*). The illusory experience of seeing a snake when there is no snake and seeing a piece of silver on a shell, take place in the phenomenal realm. In this worldly state the phenomenal world and its existence can never be contradicted. Therefore, Shankara never denies the reality of the phenomenal world, even though he denies the assumption that the *vyavahaarika* world is ultimately real. In *Brahma-Suutra Bhaasya* we find Shankara giving a lengthy argument for the existence of the phenomenal world from the phenomenological point of view. He says that the external world is a fact of consciousness and so one cannot contradict its existence.

> The non-existence of the external things cannot be maintained because we are conscious of external things. In every act of perception we are conscious of some external thing corresponding to the idea whether it be a post, or a wall, or a piece of cloth or a jar, and [Thus] that outward□that of which we are conscious cannot but exist. thing exists apart from consciousness, has necessarily to be accepted on the ground of the nature of consciousness itself. Nobody when perceiving a post or a wall is conscious of his perception only, but also men are conscious of posts and walls and the like as objects of their perception. That such is the consciousness of all men, appears also from the fact that even those who contest the existence of the external things, bear witness to their existence when they say that what If□is an internal object of cognition appears like something external. they did not at the bottom acknowledge the existence of the external If□world, how could they use the expression `like something external'? we accept the truth as given to us in our consciousness, we must admit that the object of perception appears to us as something external, not like something external.[7]

From this passage, it is obvious that Shankara does not deny the reality of the external world. He does consider the world as existing out side the subjective consciousness. The subject-object distinctions belong to the realm of the phenomena. We do not make use of the *pramaana* or the means of knowledge to attain some truth about the relative realities. Thus, the empirical world is real, from the phenomenal point of view and its existence is related only to the empirical realm. From the empirical perspective, we can never say that the world of our experience is unreal and non-existent.

Thirdly, Shankara speaks of absolute experience, i.e., *Brahmaanubhava*, which is absolute knowledge and identity of the self with *Brahman*. This experience as we have seen, at length, is trans-empirical and is of the nature of *Brahman*. It is eternal and indescribable. It is attained by the continual removal of ignorance, which is the source of multiplicity. In this state of *Brahmaanubhava*, the *Brahmajnaani* knows that he is *Brahman*, and sees everything in himself, i.e., he sees everything in terms of oneness. It is from the point f view of *paramaartha* or transcendental experience that the phenomenal world is unreal. From the point of view of the phenomenal world, however, as Shankara clearly pointed out, this relative world is real because we can never contradict or question the existence of the reality of the world, as long as we are fully part of the phenomena. But when one attains the absolute oneness with *Brahman* all duality is eliminated. Thus, from the point of view of the absolute experience, the phenomenal world is unreal or relatively real. Therefore, Shankara would say that the phenomenal world is real but not ultimately real. It is essential to appreciate this distinction between *vyavahaarika* experience and *Brahmaanubhava*. The two are infinitely apart from each other. It we take one for the other, it become impossible to understand Shankara's position clearly. For "any confusion between the two [*vyavahaarika* and *Brahmaanubhava*], is precisely the basic characteristic of the false superimposition (*adhyaasa*), which is ignorance."[8]

From what has been said, it is clear that Shankara by his doctrine of *Brahmaanubhava* and the self's absolute oneness with *Brahman*, does not speak of a dissolution of the world. At the attainment of *Brahmaanubhava*, the external world is not destroyed or annihilated. But, the *Brahmajnaani* views the world no longer from the phenomenal point of view. He sees everything in terms of oneness, which is characteristic of *Brahmaanubhava*. Thus, from the point of view of the liberated man the phenomenal world is real in the relative sense, because the state he is in, i.e., his absolute identity with *Brahman* is that which is really real. As long as one tries to understand Shankara's Advaita philosophy purely from the phenomenal point of view, he will always meet with contradictions, for what is absolutely true is the transcendental and trans-empirical.

4.2.2. Advaita Vedaanta as Pantheism

Many consider Advaita Vedaanta to be pantheistic, because self-realization consists in the identity of the self and *Brahman*. Those who hold this view cite the *mahaavaakya* `That art Thou' in their support.[9] In interpreting the above mentioned Vedaantic aphorism, we say that it cannot be interpreted in the direct meaning of `That' and `Thou', viz., *Iishvara* and *jiiva*, since such a union between the supreme Lord and the limited soul is not possible. It its implied meaning `That' refers to *Brahman* and `Thou' refers to *Aatman*. *Brahman* is the

absolute and eternal reality in the universe and *Aatman* is the pure consciousness, the eternal reality behind the individual self. *Brahman* and *Aatman* are eternally identical. In *Brahmaanubhava*, as we know, there is not experiencer and the experienced. What really happens in *Brahmaanubhava* is that the self, removed of all ignorance and its effects, realizes its eternal identity with *Brahman*. Thus, *Brahmaanubhava* cannot be considered as involving an identity between supreme Lord and the soul. Besides, the terms, `union' and `identity', are used figuratively because there is not new identity reached in *Brahmaanubhava*, but only the existing eternal identity between *Brahman* and *Aatman* is realized. Again there is no notion of God (as a theist would understand) in Shankara's thought. He does not consider *Brahman* as a deity to be worshipped or to be devoted to, but as the absolute ontological reality behind all the phenomena, which is identical with the self, the pure consciousness. So, for Shankara *Brahman* is not to be worshipped, but to be realized. If *Brahman* is viewed as a deity to be worshipped, and such a deity is seen as being identical with everything in the universe, then we have a pantheistic world-view. Since Shankara does not consider *Brahman* as deity who is identical with the universe, it seems clear that in Shankara's Advaita there is no trace of pantheism. Advaita goes beyond the distinction of theism, atheism and pantheism, as the question of God is not at all an issue in Advaita Vedaanta. Therefore, Shankarite thought does not involve any form of `isms' that views the absolute reality in terms of Godhead. But rather it is a mystical philosophy that aims at making everyone aware of his true ontological nature, i.e., *Brahman* and move towards attaining it.

4.2.3. Advaita and Ethics

Many scholars point out that Advita Vedaanta takes least interest in moral questions. Shankara does not enter into detailed consideration of practical or theoretical moral questions. If ethics means an independent inquiry into the problems of and questions concerning the meaning of values, the justification of moral judgments, the analysis of moral concepts and concrete behavior, then Shankara does not work out a detailed ethical system.[10] He did not do so for the following reasons. Advaita Philosophy considered in itself, as a system of thought, is a theory and practice of value.[11] The sole intention of Advaita Vedaanta is to help every one attain his true ontological nature, viz., *Brahman*. Each move towards this ultimate goal is a move from the lesser to the greater. Therefore, the question of value is part and parcel of every stage of Advaitic system and there is no need to treat morality specifically and separately. Besides, after one has attained self-realization, there is no place for morality at all, since the realized man, like self-realization is beyond all moral distinctions. But Shankara did suggest the need of practicing *Hathayoga* to discipline the body from all its evil inclinations and tendencies, thereby enable it to be open for genuine moral life. Besides, he also spoke of the practice of renunciation of the pleasures, attachments to the things of the world and the practice of six treasures (virtues), before one can begin the study of the Vedaantic statements. Thus, according to Shankara, such moral virtues such as compassion, self-control, charity and non-injury have as their sole purpose to help and to support the aspirant in the early stages of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. Morality is only a means for the attainment of the ultimate spiritual goal and not an end in itself. When a person attains self-realization he does not stop living a moral life. *Jiivanmukta* is not a superman who does not care for moral values and moral living. The

realized man still lives a moral life but without any effort on his part. All these virtues he practiced during the state of moral preparation adorn the *Jiivanmukta* as if jewels in his personality. Thus, there is no moral code required for the liberated man, as he cannot but live an authentic life in the state of self-realization. Thus, morality is only preparatory rather than mandatory in Shankara's thought. It is in this sense that Shankara gave a secondary place for ethics in his philosophy. This is also the reason why Shankara did not work out an elaborate system of ethics. But, he worked out a moral code that would help the aspirant to purify himself before he can take upon himself seriously the study of the scriptures. Thus, though, there is no well worked out ethical system in Shankara's thought, it is not non-ethical, but rather it is a system of value that calls the aspirant of *Brahmaanubhava* to move from the lower to the higher and finally to the highest state of *Brahman*-experience.

4.2.4. Advaita and Worship

Non-Advaitins often content that as Advaita Vedaanta believes in an absolute, attributeless and impersonal *Brahman*, it is against religion and worship of God.[12] In fact the goal and the purpose of Advaita Vedaanta is to help the aspirant to recognize the passing nature of this universe, the world of multiplicity, including the supreme Lord *Iishvara*, and attain absolute identity with *Brahman*, the ultimate reality. Therefore, from the very outset of his initiation into the process of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, Guru instructs the aspirant about the symbolic nature of the personal God, who is the Lord of the Universe.

At this early state of *Brahmaajijnaasa*, the student has not attained the full knowledge about the absolute *Brahman*. Hence he is encouraged to worship the personal God, and to practice all devotions. Worship of God and the devotional practices, which the aspirant practices at this stage, frees him from the distractions and the attractions of the external world, helps him to fix his mind on higher realities, and strengthens his power of concentration. Realizing his limitations the aspirant takes recourse to prayer and other external devotional practices which help him to move towards his ultimate goal of self-realization. Once he has reached this absolute state, all distinctions between personal God and the worshiper vanish, as the self realizes its true nature. Just as one gets rid of the differences between a clay lion and a clay sheep when he reduces them to their material cause, viz., the clay, so too the aspirant and the personal God are reduced to their ultimate cause *Brahman* and lose their differences when *Brahmaanubhava* is attained.

Thus, according to Shankara, in the state of self-realization there is no need for religion, devotional practices or worship of God for the realized man. Unlike other theistic systems of thought, for Advaita Vedaanta, religion and worship of God are not ends-in-themselves, but means to the ultimate realization of the self. Nevertheless, Shankara did recognize the important role worship and devotion play in the early stages of aspirant's way to self-realization. He wrote many hymns in praise of popular deities like Shiva, Vishnu and Divine Mother, to help ordinary people to move towards their ultimate realization. These devotions are aimed at helping ordinary people at the initial state of *Brahmaajijnaasa*. Shankara himself lived out the religious practices and devotion to various deities as the *Jiivanmukta*, not because he needed it, but as an example for others. Therefore, for

Shankara, devotion and worship of the personal God are significant in the life of the aspirant, but only as means rather than as the end.

4.2.5. Advaita as Nihilism

Another accusation against Shankara is that his approach to reality is negative and pessimistic.[13] Those who hold this view claim that Advaita Vedaanta is a sort of Nihilism, because the use of `*neti neti*' and the denial of everything in trying to describe *Brahman* ultimately lead to void (*suunya*). On the other hand, the contention of these thinkers seems to be wrong. More than any other philosophers in the history of Indian thought, Shankara pointed out the fundamental and ultimate spiritual nature of the universe and the individual. He declared that we are greater than we think we are. Man, in ignorance, sees him as limited, finite, and associated with the body, whereas in reality, he is the supreme and pure consciousness. Therefore, Shankara is neither negative nor pessimistic in his approach to reality. Rather he affirms the absolute nature of the individual soul and the universe. In doing this, he makes use of the negative method (*apavaada*) for achieving realization of the ontological state of absolute identity with *Brahman*, because self-realization being trans-empirical is beyond and above all that is phenomenal. So, it is not within our power to grasp from the empirical point of view. All that we can do by way of understanding this state is to use the negative method and describe what this state is not. Thus, though Shankara uses the negative method, its purpose is absolute identity of the self with *Brahman*, i.e., *Brahmaanubhava*. Therefore, there is neither pessimism nor nihilism in Shankara's philosophy, but it is a positive and purposive thinking, that aims at taking everyone to the highest level of existence.

We can summarize the main intent of Shankara as follows. Shankara's non-dualistic approach to reality and his Advaitic understanding of self-realization do give a reasonable explanation to the basic issues of philosophy, if, like Shankara, one accepts the distinction between the phenomenal experience of reality (*vyavahaarika*) and the transcendental experience of reality (*Brahmaanubhava*). This distinction is crucial for the understanding of Shankara's Advaita Philosophy. The two are different approaches to the one and the same reality. The former is characterized by duality and subject-object distinction while, oneness and identity characterize the latter. At the same time one must not take these two approaches as different world-views imposed by the subjective consciousness, as scholars who consider Shankara as a subjective idealist tend to do.

In fact, the two approaches are not construction of the subjective consciousness, but tow ontological states in one's understanding of reality. In other words, reality is eternally present in its true nature and it does not depend on our subjective consciousness. The ontological truth about reality is that *Brahman* is the absolute reality in relation to which the phenomenal world is relatively real. This has always been the ontological fact. It does not come about at the time, when it is recognized by the subjective consciousness, nor it is construction of the mental process of knowing. For Shankara this truth is obtained from the Scripture. As long as one is in the phenomenal world and is fully conditioned by it, one cannot recognize anything higher than the phenomena, and he accepts the phenomenal world as the absolute reality. When, by the removal of ignorance and its effects, one goes

beyond the empirical experience and experiences the identity of oneself with the absolute *Brahman*, one sees the true reality as it is. Then one recognizes the unreality or the passing nature of the phenomenal world.

These stages of one's experience in the understanding of reality can be compared with the dream and the waking state. When a person is in the dream-state and perceives a dream, he is fully certain that the experience he is going through is real, as in the dream-state one does not doubt the reality of the dream. But as he awakes he realizes how illusory the dream is. In the same way when one attain self-realization one sees the passing and unreal nature of the phenomenal world. Thus, after the realization of the identity of the self with *Brahman*, the reality remains the same as before; but we have gained only the knowledge of the fact. In the illustration of mistakenly seeing a snake for a rope the rope remains a rope during and after the removal of the illusion of the rope-snake. We have gained the truth about the fact that this particular object we perceived was not a snake, but a rope. In the same way, when *Brahmaanubhava* is attained, we realize that what we perceived in the phenomenal experience with its differences and multiplicity, is the one and the same absolute *Brahman*. Thus, self-realization does not destroy the reality of the phenomenal world, but indicates that how limited the phenomenal reality is. *Brahmaanubhava*, therefore, is the realization of the absolute and unchanging reality. It is the realization, which involves the supreme consummation or the ripening of the scriptural knowledge. It brings about freedom from ignorance and subject-object duality. It is an integral experience in which the whole personality of the aspirant participates and gets transformed.[14]

NOTES

1. Max Mueller F.: *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), pp. 121-122.

2. Sures Chandra Chakravarti: *The Philosophy of the Upanishads* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1953), p. ix.

3. Ram Pratap Singh, *Vedaanta of Shankara* (Jaipur: Bharat Publishing House, 1949), p. 333.

4. Krishna Chandra Bhattacharrya, *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. II (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1958), p. 118.

5. K.A. Kirsnha Iyer, *Vedaanta or Science of Reality* (Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1930), p. 91.

6. Radhakrishnan S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 11, p. 585.

7. *BSB*, Thaibaut, II, ii, 28, pp. 419-420.

8. Eliot Dautsch, p. 95.

9. Cf. Smet De R.V., p. 266.

10. Cf. Eliot Deutsch, p. 99.

11. Cf. Ibid.

12. Cf. *AB*, Swami Nihilananda, p. x.

13. Cf. *ibid.*, p. xi.

14. Cf. Ramamurthi A., p. 184.

15. James V. McGlynn and Paul Mary Farley, *The Metaphysics of Being and God* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs., 1966), pp. 247-248.

CONCLUSION

Now that we have come to the end of our work, we could spend some time reflecting on the relevance of Shankara=s Advaita philosophy, that is centered on the concept of *Brahmaanubhava*, to the present day world. As a matter of fact the world has become a global village with the development in various means of communication. People to people contact, in spite of vast distances, has been made the order of the day. In recent times the development in the information technology has made it easier for people to communicate and reach out. News and views are exchanged at a rapid speed that a person, who lives in one side of the globe, can get to know what happens in the other side of the globe within a short time. Similarly goods and services are transferred from one place to the other, with the developments in the means of transportation. There are greater facilities today for interaction and contact among people than ever before.

In spite of these technological facilities to bring people together, the world still stands a divided world. There are deep-rooted barriers that separate people from each other. These barriers stem from linguistic, racial, cultural, religious, economic, political or any other similar prejudices. Language, which is meant to be a medium of communication, has become a medium of alienation among different linguistic groups. Often we see language in stead of bringing people together separates them. The racial divide among the blacks, the colored and the whites is there for all to see in different parts of the globe. In some places it is out-right, while in other places it is subtle. In some places the racial divide manifests in caste and communal animosities, rivalries and clashes. Culture, which expresses the deeper yearnings of the people of a society and all that is finer in them, often becomes a cause of fight among people. Religion, whose aim is to take people to their ultimate destiny and to the experience of the Divine, often forgets this responsibility. We see wars are fought in the name of religion today. The world is also divided on the basis of economy. We generally group the nations of the world economically as under-developed, developing and developed. The gap between each of these is very large. We find similar economic divide within every nation and society. Thus, we speak of the upper class, the middle class and the lower class. Politically the world is broken into pieces. There are boarder disputes plaguing every nation. Claims and counter claims are made by many a nation for a piece of land. The world has witnessed many wars being fought to settle score on this count. Thus the world is a divided world. The more we progress in finding means to unite the world and its people, the greater the distance that is generated among them.

One may wonder as to the reason for such divides existing in the world, in spite of the progress that has taken place in many a fields. The reason for this state of affairs comes from humankind=s attitude towards life and the world. People in general today, base their life on the peripheral and the accidental. They have lost sight of the essential and the fundamental. People look for that which works and bring results, without being fully aware of their consequences for themselves and for the world. That which works is mistaken for truth, that which is useful is seen as a moral good and that which satisfies one=s emotional

need is viewed as a religious value. A person caught up in this shallow attitude to living does not experience anything beyond the level of the senses. So he is not able to experience the underlying principle of unity behind the diversities of everyday experience.

Thomas Aquinas speaking about unity among beings points to a threefold unity. Firstly, unity in the level of accidental perfection, which consists in unity among beings in the external and peripheral level. For instance there is a oneness among all white beings. To this class belongs unity based on caste, color, race or creed. Secondly, the essential unity, which is a participation among beings in the level of essence. It is the unity among the same species. For example the natural solidarity a human person feels with other human person as they share the same human nature. Thirdly, the unity of existence, by which every finite being participates in the being of the Divine Pure Existence. The last type of unity is the most fundamental one, because it is the participation in the absolute being that makes a being really what it is both in its essential and accidental levels.[1]

This division of Thomas Aquinas helps us to understand the reason why our world is a divided world. People, being caught up in the accidental level of unity has forgotten the deeper levels of unity both in that of essence and existence. Since human person has forgotten that he is one with all other persons, as they share the same nature, there is discord within the human society. Again as he has lost sight of his fundamental unity with the Divine Existence, he finds disunity in the whole universe, not only among human persons, but in his relationship with the universe as well. Thus, the loss of this sense of unity is the reason for our experiences of differences, multiplicity, discords, rivalries and animosities at every levels of our existence.

Shankara=s Advaita Vedaanta with its goal of self-realization brought to the focus, the all-important truth of the fundamental unity of all in the absolute *Brahman*. It was Shankara=s endeavor to communicate the truth that >behind the diversities we experience in our life and in the world, there is an underlying oneness= and help people to achieve this oneness in their lives. Thus, Shankara=s Advaita is not a useless, impractical and otherworldly vendetta, but a philosophy of life that attempts to flower all that is genuine and authentic in a person by taking him to the depth of his being, viz., *Brahman*. The call to oneness and unity within oneself, with others and finally with the whole universe in the absolute *Brahman*, which is the message of Advaita of Shankara, is a message not bound by time or culture. It is a message applicable to all times, all peoples and all cultures. Understanding this message of unity and attempting to live it would bring in a person a number of attitudes, which would make the world a better place to live for all. We could spell out some of these attitudes and their consequences for humanity.

The cultivation of the unitive perspective of Shankara would help a person to acquire a sense of balance in the manner he looks at life and the world. According to Aristolte >the principle of moderation= is very fundamental to existence in every aspect. The unitive perspective gives a person an authentic and a holistic view of reality, which in turn helps the person to avoid the extremes. Forgetting the middle path and choosing extreme course of action are the main reasons for the evils that exist in the world today. For instance science and scientific approach are very beneficial to humankind, but an extremist

approach regarding these has led to the emergence of scientism and technologism, which has in turn victimized humanity. Acquiring an absolute perspective of life would help a person to treat nature with respect. As Martin Heidegger would say, from the Being-perspective a person would not be a master of nature, but a shepherd who shepherds the absolute, which is at the core of everything that exists. Such a person would use science to explore nature, but not to exploit it; use reason to facilitate the flowering of the inner spirit, but not to dominate it; and see world and life in its totality, but would not attempt to fragment it.

The constant focus on the oneness of existence would help a person to give up the ghetto mentality and an outlook that is caged. The world is divided in the manner we have described earlier on the basis of caste, color, creed and language because people=s view of the world is conditioned and limited by this caged outlook. Since a holistic perspective is lacking, they look at life in a fragmented way. Oneness with the absolute and oneness with humankind is totally lacking because people are only open to the accidental and the peripheral dimensions of existence. This deeper fragmentation of not being open to the essential and existential unity is the reason for people to consider the accidental realm of existence as essential. The cultivation of a perspective that is centered on the oneness of all in the absolute would help one to de-fragment the fragmentation that has led to a superficial living.

The unitive perspective would counter the attitudes of materialism and consumerism that sways the world today. Living a life founded on the absolute perspective opens a person to the truth of the existence of a realm that is beyond the phenomenal reality. The truth Shankara=s Vedaanta philosophy wants to communicate to every human person is that he, by his nature, is much more than what he thinks he is. He has a destiny that is so sublime and so real, that in relation to it, the phenomenal existence would be considered unreal. The realization of this truth makes the aspirant to live a life in this world as if he is not of this world. It helps him to renounce the allurements of the material world and its domination and move towards higher planes of existence. By providing various means, to transcend the phenomenal existence and move towards the nomenal existence, the seeker is led to the final fulfillment of his seeking. In this manner Advaita philosophy remains an anti-dot to the poison of materialism that holds the world of today in chains.

The experience of the oneness of all in the absolute cultivates in one an accommodative spirit. Seen from the absolute perspective all differences vanish. Untouched by differences one is able to let go and accept life as it comes. A flexible mind and accommodative spirit is vital for peaceful co-existence among nations and peoples. It is the lack of flexibility in thinking and living that makes one come into conflict with others and make this world difficult for all to live. The ability to accommodate with others implies that one recognizes that truth, goodness and value are not one=s own monopoly, but they belong to all. The recognition of truth, goodness and value in the other leads to better understanding among nations and peoples.

In this manner, Shankara=s philosophy of *Brahmaanubhava* (self-realization) has a great potential. It not only helps the aspirant to arrive at self-realization, but also by propagating

a world-view that is holistic it emanates a great number of positive attitudes. These attitudes if recognized, accepted and cultivated would enable individuals, societies and nations of the world to live in harmony and peace. These attitudes would bring about a living among nations and peoples that recognizes each other=s differences and diversities, but moves beyond them and sees the underlying unity of all. When such attitudes take hold of people=s minds in a large way, there will emerge internal integration within a nation or a community and international understanding among nations. Such a state would bring about an end the different types of divides we talked about among individuals and nations. Thus, Shankara=s philosophy of self-realization has much to offer the world of our times.

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APPENDIX

WORKS OF SHANKARA

1. BHAASHYAS (Commentaries)

Brahma Sutras

Isavaya Upanishad

Kena Upanishad

Katha Upanishad

Prasana Upanishad

Mandukya Upanishad

Mandukya Karika

Aitareya Upanishad

Brihadaarnyaka Upanishad

Taiitireeya Upanishad

Chhandogya Upanishad

Sree Nrisimha Taapaneeya Upanishad

Sreemad Bhagavad-geeta

Sre Vishnu Sahasranama

Sanat Sujateeyam

Lalita Tri-satee

Hastaamalakeeyam

2. PRAKRIYA GRANTHAS (Books of Fundamental Concepts of Vedaanta)

Viveka Choodamani

Aparokshanubhooti

Upadesha Sahasri

Vaakya Vritti

Swaatma Niroopanam

Atma-bodha

Sarva Vedanta Sara Samgraha

Prabodha Sudhakaram

Swaatma Praksika

Advaita Anubhooti

Brahma-anuchintanam

Prasana-utara Ratnamaalika

Sadachara-anusandhanam

Yaga Travali

Anatma-sree Vigarhanam

Swaroopa-anusandhanam

Pancheekaranam

Tattwa-bodha

Prouda-anubhooti

Brahma Jnanavali

Laghu Vakyavritti

Moha Mudgaram (Bhaja Govindam)

Prapancha Saaram

3. STOTRAS (Hymns and Meditation Verses)

Sri Ganesa Pancharatnam

Ganesa Bhujangam

Subrahmanya Bhujangam

Siva Bhujangam

Devi Bhujangam

Bhavani Bhujangam

Sree Rama Bhujangam

Vishnu Bhujangam

Sarada Bhujangam

Sivnanda Lahari

Soundarya Lahari

Ananda Lahari

Siva-paadaadi-kesaanta-varnana Stotram

Siva-kesaadi-paadaanta-varnana Stotram

Sree Vishne-paadaadi-kesanta-varnana Stotram

Uma-Maheswara Stotram

Tripurasundari Vedapada Stotram

Tripurasundari Maansapooja Stotram

Tripurasundari Ashtakam

Devi-shashti-upachara-pooja Stotram

Mantra-Maatruka-Puspamaala Stavam

Kanakadhara Stotram

Annapoorna Stotram

Ardha-naree-Natesvara Stotram

Bhamana-Amba-Ashtakam

Meenakshi Stotram

Meenakshi Pancharatnam

Gouri Dasakam

Navaratna Malika

Kalyana Vrishti-Stavam

Lalita Pancharatnam

Maaya Panchakam

Suvarna Mala Stuti

Dasa Sloki

Veda Sara Siva Stotram

Siva Panchaakshara Stotram

Siva-Aparadha-Kshamapana Stotram

Dakshinamoorthy Varnmala Stotram

Mrityunjaya Mannasa Pooja Stotram

Siva Namavali Ashtakam

Kaala Bhairava Ashtakam

Shat-padee Stotram

Siva-Panchakshara-Nakshatra-Mala Stotram

Dwadasa-Linga Stotram

Kasi Panchakam

Hanumat Pancharatnam

Lakshmi-Nri Simha-Pancharatnam

Lakshmi-Nri Simha-Karunarasa Stotram

Panduranga-Ashtakam

Achyuta-Ashtakam

Sree Krishna-Ashtakam

Hari Stuti

Govinda-Ashtakam

Bhagavat-Maanasa-Pooja

Praata-Samrana-Stotram

Jagannatha-Ashtakam

Gurvashtakam

Narmada-Ashtakam

Yamuna-Ashtakam

Ganga-Ashtakam

Manikarnika-Ashtakam

Nirguna Maanasa Pooja

Eka Sloki

Yati Panchakam

Jeevan-Mukata-Ananda-Lahari

Dhanya-Ashtakam

Upadesa (Sadhana) Panchakam

Sata Sloki

Maneesha Panchakam

Advaita Pancharatnam

Nirvana Shatkam